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No. 168.

"HEART WALLS."

BY FRANK M. IMBRIE.

A summer's fate night—half-robed:
Enraptured moonbeams decked our earth;
Enraptured river's silvered stream:
And lit the star-hours' mystic birth.
Childhood and manhood! what strange fate
Placed in her breast a woman's heart,
Whose fluttering dawn thrilled through her frame
With painful joy—Love's embryo dart.
Gently his arm stole round her form;
The clasp of love's new-born life—
She dared not lift the slumbering eye
Lest he should note the soul's keen strife.
Frightened and coy it warmed her veins:
Vibrating through the prisoned hand;
The beating heart—so near him—throbbed
With strange, wild power—by passion fanned.
Oh, did he deem that pressure lost?
Could manly wisdom fathom aught
She strove with woman's will to hide,
In that brief space, joy-aided, pain-fringed.
Tense hurried on by Time's swift flight;
To him 'twas lost—Love's natal hour,
Her being's thrilling fibers woke,
And left a fate-bequest—life-dower.

Perchance 'tis best—God knoweth well:
But through her life soul-wallings ring;
Forever moans the echo-tone,
Filled with the weird, "What might have been."

The Mad Detective:

OR,
THE GIRLS OF NEW YORK.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "DOCKY MOUNTAIN BOY," "WOLF DEMON,"
"OVERLAND KID," "RED MAZEPPA," "ACE OF
SPADES," "HEAT OF FIRE," "WITCHES
OF NEW YORK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST MOVE.

THE tiny clock on the mantle in the room of Ernestine Van Tromp had just struck eight, and the fair-haired girl looked up from the book which she was reading. This was on the evening following the one whereon Van Tromp and O'Shane had met Alex Blackie at the Broadway Pavilion.

"Elbert said that he would be home at eight," she murmured, as she glanced at the clock.

Then the sound of his footsteps on the stairs came to her ears, and a moment after he entered the room.

"Ernestine, I've brought you a visitor!" he exclaimed, as he sat down on the lounge by her side.

"Yes?" she said, carelessly.

"An old friend of mine, who has been absent in Texas for quite a time. He has just returned to the city. And, Ernestine, if it would be agreeable to you, I should like to ask him to make our house his home while he remains in New York."

"Why, of course, Elbert; I am sure I shall be happy to receive any friend of yours."

The girl had a very high regard for her cousin, who had always been to her more like a brother than any thing else.

"Will you come down to the parlor and see him?"

"Yes," and the girl rose languidly and laid down her book.

"I am sure you will like him," Elbert said, also rising. Then the two proceeded downstairs.

Van Tromp ushered Ernestine gallantly into the parlor. A gentleman, clad entirely in black, rose at their approach.

"Miss Van Tromp, allow me to present my old friend, Captain Blackie," Elbert said.

The girl acknowledged the introduction, then raised her eyes to the face of the stranger. One sudden, convulsive throb her heart gave as she looked upon the pale, handsome features of the captain.

A visit to the barber and hairdresser, and an entire new suit of black, had worked a wonderful change in the appearance of the man who, but a day before, had been a homeless outcast.

Blackie looked ten years younger, and as the girl's eyes fell upon his handsome features, now wearing the careless, happy smile which became them so well, her heart acknowledged that for the first time she looked upon a man whom she could love.

The three sat down and soon became engaged in conversation.

Blackie appeared at his best; his easy self-possession not only impressed the young girl favorably, but really delighted Van Tromp.

"He's a devilish smart fellow," he murmured to himself, and he'll make Ernestine a capital husband."

And, with the thought, his conscience was easier.

And as for the girl, she listened with rapt attention while the young man talked of the wild soldier life in the army, then described a horseback journey through the Louisiana Lowlands under the warm rays of a southern sun, and how, in the dusky twilight, he had ridden for miles amid the strange, sweet perfume of the orange groves.

In all her life she had never met such a man. How insipid, how weak seemed to her now the rapid flatteries of the fashionable butterflies who had paid her court! Like Antony, she might say, "This was a man."

Then, breaking off suddenly, he begged Miss Ernestine to favor him with some music.

The young girl complied shyly; she felt a strange reluctance to display her skill, and yet she was an excellent musician, but, after listening to the fascinating words of Blackie, she felt a distrust of her own powers.

"What shall I play?" she asked, as she seated herself at the piano, and he leaned carelessly on the side of the instrument.

"Oh, anything you like," he replied, gazing intently upon the fair young face with such an earnest look that the girl was fain to evade the glances of the brilliant brown eyes by letting her gaze rest upon the music-sheet.

Then she played, ever and anon raising her head, still to encounter the earnest look of the dark eyes. And yet he was not conscious that



A single glance and the cheeks grew pale, and the smile faded into a look of horror.

he was gazing intently upon the girl, for another image than hers was before his eyes; an oval, olive-tinged face—fair type of the warm southern beauty—lighted up by great gray-blue eyes.

And the air, too, the dreamy Kiss Waltz, how often had he stood by her side and listened while the liquid notes flowed softly from her skilful touch!

The music ending alone broke the spell which had bound him to the past.

With a sudden start he seemed to recover himself, and, in his graceful, easy way, complimented the young girl upon her musical skill until the fair face was red with blushes.

"And do you play, captain?" asked Van Tromp, from his position on the sofa, had been intently watching the two, and was inwardly rejoicing at the brilliant prospects of fingering fifty thousand dollars.

"Oh, a little," Blackie answered, carelessly, and, in obedience to Ernestine's pressing request, he took her place at the piano and dashed off a lively Spanish air, full of the rattle of the castanets and the jingling mule-bells—a remembrance of the Mexican frontier, as he laughingly explained.

Then the conversation turned upon poetry, and, to Van Tromp's astonishment, he discovered that not only was the captain thoroughly acquainted with all the works of the more celebrated poets, but he had also treasured up in his memory many a sweet verse that some nameless songster had given to the world.

And Ernestine, as she sat and listened while Blackie, in low, musical voice, told of love and noble deeds deftly woven into song by the minstrel's cunning brain, thought never in all her life had she looked upon such a man.

The evening passed rapidly away. It was eleven before any one of the three had noted how the time was flying, and then, with a kind good-night, Ernestine retired.

"Well, what do you think of her?" Van Tromp asked.

"She is an angel!" Blackie replied.

"You think so?"

"Yes, I do not think that I have ever looked upon a sweeter or fairer face."

"I noticed, when you were standing by the piano while she was playing, that you seemed entranced," Van Tromp said.

An expression of pain came over Blackie's features.

"You misunderstood me," he replied, slowly.

"I was not thinking of her then; I was thinking of the past. The air she played was the favorite one of the woman who was once all the world to me. It brought her back to my memory instantly."

"Where is this woman now?"

Blackie shook his head.

"That is a riddle which I spent a year endeavoring to solve," he said, slowly. "It does not matter much, though. She is dead to me now. She was an exquisite pianist, and many a time has she played that Kiss Waltz for me."

"I think that our scheme will succeed," Van Tromp said, changing the conversation.

"Yes, if you are careful about one thing."

"What is that?"

"Keep liquor away from me," Blackie said, seriously; "don't let me touch a single drop, for, if I drink but one glass, I shall not be satisfied until I've had twenty."

"I'll look out for that; but, come, let me show you to your quarters."

And Van Tromp conducted Blackie up-stairs.

Ernestine had retired at once to her room, and dismissed her maid, for she wished to be alone with her thoughts.

Drawing up an easy-chair, she sat down in it before the large glass which occupied the space between two of the windows; then drawing out the hair-pins, she allowed her golden locks to float down loosely over her shoulders. With a pensive smile she leaned her cheek upon her hand and looked into the shining mirror.

A single glance and the cheeks grew pale, and the smile faded into a look of horror. She was not alone. The glass reflected back the figure of a man standing in the center of the room.

And that man was John Blaine!

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO MARYS.

AND just one week from the time when Carlisle Stewart and Napoleon Weathers had met the two young workingwomen, Mary Martin and "Chocolate," at the glass-blowers' ball, the two young men, at seven o'clock in the evening, found themselves walking down Fourteenth street, toward the house where the two girls resided.

Had it rested with Stewart alone, he would never have seen Mary Martin again except by chance, but Weathers had given his friend no peace; by day and by night he had talked of nothing but their two chance acquaintances.

Stewart had endured the assault until at last he had yielded to his friend's desire, and the two had set out to make their call.

Down the long block they walked, picking their way through the groups of children playing on the sidewalk.

The whole block was in reality one great tenement, although composed of different buildings. But the houses were all alike, six stories high, the door reached by a flight of ten or twelve steps, and in the basement some four or five steps, below the level of the street two small shops.

Street, steps and windows were all alive with people, although the night was quite chilly, and the ground was covered with snow and slush.

Stewart had been looking around him with a thoughtful brow at the visible signs of poverty and dire, absolute want.

"Strange! how many thousands in this city are compelled to herd like cattle in these barracks!" he said, as they walked onward.

"That's just like you, always moralizing," Weathers observed; "but you haven't the least idea how happy some of the dwellers in these great barracks are. 'Poor and content, you know. I forget the rest of it. I'll bet you anything you like that these two girls in their little room, 'way up at the top of the house, are completely happy.'"

"Perhaps so," Stewart said, shortly.

"This is the house," and Weathers paused.

"How do you know? Did you notice the number the other night? They look all alike to me."

"I remember that lager-beer saloon underneath," Weathers replied, pointing to the little shop, "and that's in and have some lager before we go up."

"No, my friend, I am not generally in the habit of visiting ladies with the smell of liquor on my lips," Stewart said, gravely.

"You are altogether too good for this world," Weathers retorted. "After you've got up three or four pairs of stairs you'll wish that you had taken my advice, and had some refreshment before you started."

"Three or four pairs of stairs!"

"Yes; there's five altogether; they're on the first floor—next to the roof."

"You understand all about it."

"Oh, yes; I'm the most curious fellow that ever lived, and got all the particulars from my partner the other night. But come, let's go up."

So up the steps and into the house they went. Up the long, narrow stairways, innocent of carpets, through the dimly-lighted halls, until at last they paused on the top story. The next flight of stairs led to the roof.

Weathers and Stewart paused at the head of the stairs. Before them were two doors, the upper panels of which were of ground glass. Through the glass of the left door shone a light.

"That's the one," Weathers said, pointing to it. "I remember she said take the door to the left."

Then Weathers advanced to the door and knocked gently.

There was an instant commotion inside; then the door opened and Chocolate appeared.

"Oh!" she cried, her eyes sparkling. "Mary, it's Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Van Buren."

The two young men had never thought of the names under which they had been introduced to the girls at the ball, and had not unde-

ceived them, and, as at the present it seemed rather awkward to attempt to explain, they held their peace and accepted the cordial invitation of the young girl to come in.

They found themselves in a little square room, evidently used as a kitchen; two narrow glass doors led to another room beyond the first, which was lighted up by two windows looking upon the yard of the house. The inner room was the parlor. Another glass door by the side of the one leading into the entry, led to a dark bedroom.

Weathers' sharp eyes detected this, as through the crack of the door standing ajar, he saw a bed, and of course guessed that it was the girls' sleeping apartment; but the examination was promptly cut short by Chocolate's closing the door of the little room when she closed the other.

The other Mary, who, as usual, was busy at the sewing-machine, in the inner room, rose to receive the visitors, and responded in her quiet, lady-like way to the salutation of the two.

The young men being seated, looked around them. The two little apartments were as neat as wax, though almost scantily furnished. By the window, on a little stand, were some half a dozen plants, the majority of which appeared to be dead or dying. Over the plants, in a little cage, was a canary bird. A small chromo, representing a woman senseless and half buried in the snow, while over her stood rescuing angels in the shape of two large dogs of the San Bernard breed—evidently the gift of some weekly newspaper, was tacked, unframed, against the wall over the fireplace. A few other common engravings, cut from the illustrated papers, adorned the walls.

"What cosy little rooms you have here," Weathers said.

"Yes; sky-parlors," Chocolate replied; "they're real nice when you get up to them, and the air in summer is much pleasanter than it is in the lower rooms. It's very hot down stairs in the summer; about half of the people in the house sleep out on the roof on hot nights."

"How many families are there in the house?" Stewart inquired.

"Twenty-four when all the rooms are let," Chocolate replied.

"And counting, say four in a family, that would make nearly a hundred persons in this one house," Stewart observed, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes," the girl replied, quickly; "four is setting it very low. The Irish family that live in next door have eight in the family, and keep two boarders besides."

"Two boarders! ten of them altogether!" exclaimed Weathers. "How the deuce do they all get along?"

"Well, I don't know," Chocolate replied, laughing; "but I'm sure there's ten of them. There's the father and mother, then the two old folks, four children and the two boarders. Isn't that ten?"

"Yes; but how do they manage to get along with such a family?" Stewart said.

"Well now, I had a curiosity to know that," Chocolate said, demurely, "so I just got hold of the little boy one day, as he was going out with a big basket, and gave him a penny, and the honest little fellow told me that he was going out begging. He goes round to houses, gets cold victuals, which he brings home, and the mother cooks them up. He said he generally got his basket nearly full. And the father, he works on the streets, he is a laborer, and the mother takes in washing. She's a real hard-working woman. I met her on the stairs the other day, and she confided her troubles to me. The children are not very well, the two little ones; and one is such a pretty, blue-eyed baby. I go in sometimes when I hear it cry, and know that she's all alone, and take care of it for her; and she said that if Patrick—that's her husband—could only get some work in the country, where they could have a little house, with a pig and some chickens, she wouldn't ask for anything more this side of the grave."

"Mary is quite interested in Mrs. Murphy," the sewing-girl said with a smile.

"It isn't her so much as that baby," replied Chocolate, quickly. "I like babies and they like me. There ain't one in the whole block that won't cry to come to auntie Chocolate when they see me."

"Chocolate!" said Weathers, in surprise; "what a strange name."

"But that isn't my name," replied the girl, with a wry face; "my name is Croftin, and the little ones when they try to pronounce it, get it something like Chocolate, and a great stupid heard me mock one of them once and he commenced to call me Chocolate, and now it's a regular nickname for me; besides, I work in a chocolate factory down in West Broadway, near where the Hudson river depot used to be."

"And where do you work?" asked Stewart, turning to Mary.

"At home, sir," she replied. "I take work from the shops, and sew on it here. I like it much better than going out."

"Mary isn't like me," Chocolate said, with a confident toss of her little head; "she don't get along out in the world as well as I do. Why, just think, she's afraid in the dark, and thinks she'll see hobgoblins, and all sorts of terrible things!"

"And you make shirts?" said Weathers, who had been looking at the basket of work. "Just what I want! Will you make me a dozen?"

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE POOR LIVE.

STEWART looked at his friend in astonishment. He was perfectly well aware that Weathers had laid in a dozen new shirts only the week before.

The two girls, too, were astonished at the question.

"Oh, you needn't look, now, all of you!" Weathers exclaimed. "I'm in earnest and mean just what I say. I can't get a shirt to fit me high nor low. Now, Miss, if you will undertake to make me a dozen shirts, I know that you'll be able to suit me, and I shall be eternally grateful."

"Why, of course you can make them, Mary!" Chocolate exclaimed. "I used to make all my father's shirts, and I can cut them out for you if you're afraid to try."

"I am in fear that perhaps I should not be able to please you," Mary said, timidly. "Oh, I know you will!" Weathers declared, confidently, "and I like here, too, wants some shirts to fit him. Ladies, if you had any idea what I have suffered, during the last month, in hearing him swear every time he put on a clean shirt—"

"Oh, come, now! that's too much!" exclaimed Stewart, half offended, yet not able to keep from laughing at Weathers' serious manner.

"I don't really believe that," Mary said, coming to Stewart's rescue, and he thanked her by a grateful look.

"How much do you get, Miss, for a dozen shirts, if it's not an impertinent question?" Weathers asked.

"Twenty-five cents apiece—three dollars for a dozen; that is for the making only," Mary explained.

The two friends exchanged looks. "By Jinks! somebody must make money out of shirts, then!" Weathers exclaimed. "I paid forty-eight dollars a dozen for these I've got on."

"Perhaps they are hand-made," Chocolate suggested; "let me see!" and she rose and approached Weathers.

"Oh, yes, they're hand-made," Weathers said. "I remember that they said I could have the machine-made shirts for three and three and a half apiece."

"Pull up your coat-sleeve and let me look," said Chocolate, in the abrupt, peremptory manner so natural to her.

Weathers obeyed immediately; he rather enjoyed being commanded by the lively young girl.

Chocolate's sharp eyes soon detected the truth. "They're not hand-made!" she exclaimed, triumphantly. "It's machine-stitching. You've been swindled."

Weathers looked at her in a helpless sort of way. "You see how they take advantage of my youth and innocence!" he cried. "Now, Miss Mary, you really must take this shirt contract."

"Oh, she'll do it!" cried Chocolate, quickly; "won't you, Mary?"

"I'm afraid that I shouldn't be able to please you," Mary said, slowly, with a timid look in Stewart's grave face.

But that gentleman had understood Weathers' stratagem at last; he saw that it was his design, first, to assist the girl; second, to have an excuse to visit them. So, with a smile on his face and a look of entreaty in his dark eyes, he joined in his friend's solicitations.

"I shall really feel much indebted, Miss Mary, if you will undertake this task for us," he said. "You see, both Nip and myself are two poor, friendless bachelors, without sisters or mothers, so that we are utterly at the mercy of the shirt-makers."

"No mother and no sisters!" exclaimed Chocolate. "Oh, you poor boy!" and she patted Weathers' head in sympathy.

The young man was delighted; the frankness of the girl pleased him.

The one look from Stewart's eyes was quite enough for Mary. Already to please him had become the great desire of her life, and yet she knew it not.

"If you will promise not to be angry with me if I fail," she said, slowly.

"Oh, we'll hold you blameless!" Weathers cried, lightly, "and take all the responsibility. You must buy the cloth and every thing necessary, and make two dozen shirts, and we will pay you forty-eight dollars a dozen for them."

"You shan't do any such thing!" Chocolate exclaimed, in her usual quick, abrupt way. "It isn't worth any such price as that, unless she buys fancy bosoms at two dollars each, and I don't believe that you would like them."

"No, of course not!" said Stewart, quickly; he had a horror of any thing looking like display. "Plain bosoms will be quite good enough."

"But the best of cloth, of course," Weathers said.

"No, you don't want the best!" Chocolate exclaimed, decidedly, and then she thought of the way in which she had spoken, and her face colored up.

"I didn't mean that!" she exclaimed, in confusion; "that is, I didn't mean to speak so rudely. I'm afraid you'll think that I am an awful girl," and she looked quite serious as she spoke.

"Oh, no, of course not," the two friends answered in chorus.

"I didn't mean to be rude, but I've got in the habit of speaking quick and saying just what I think. But what I mean is, that the dearest cloth doesn't always wear the best; it's too heavy, and cracks. Mary can make the shirts all by hand, and find all the materials, for two dollars and a half apiece, and then she'll make double what she can by her machine-work. Mary is a real nice sewer, too."

"Two dozen shirts, then, at thirty dollars, will be sixty dollars," Weathers remarked, as he took out his pocket-book. "How much money will you want for the materials?"

Chocolate made a little mental calculation. "I guess that thirty dollars will be enough."

Weathers counted out the money into her hand.

"There," he added; "now understand: we give this enormous contract entirely into your hands, Miss Mary. You are to make the shirts for two dollars and a half apiece, and find all the materials, to open behind, and large cuffs like these," and he exhibited one of his.

"We'll bring you down the exact measure next time we come."

Then Stewart's eyes were attracted by the little stand of plants by the window.

"You have quite a collection of flowers here," he said, rising and crossing over to them. Mary followed him, leaving Weathers and Chocolate alone by the table in the kitchen. "They are not in very good condition," he continued, bending over them, and noticing that the great part of them seemed to be either dead or dying.

"No; I don't know what is the matter with them," Mary replied, leaning listlessly against the side of the window. "I am very fond of flowers, and take good care of them, but they do not seem to thrive."

"A bird, too," glancing at the canary. "Yes; my Dick; and he sings very sweetly to me in the daytime while I am busy sewing."

"You seem to be quite happy in your little home here?"

"Yes; Chocolate and I are both orphans, and almost without friends."

And so the two talked on; he interested in the pretty, ladylike girl, with her sweet, sorrowful face, and she drinking in the dangerous incense of his praise, like one in a dream of bliss from which there could be no waking.

There was danger for both; they knew it, and yet could not resist the temptation.

And while Mary and Stewart were bending over the flowers, Weathers and Chocolate had got into busy conversation.

"How much rent do you have to pay here?" Weathers asked, in his inquisitive way.

"Ten dollars a month."

"That's about two dollars and a half a week; don't you find it pretty hard to get along sometimes?"

"No, not now," Chocolate replied, briskly; "I have a splendid place, and get eight dollars a week, and Mary makes about five dollars a week on her sewing-machine. She expects to get some lace-collars this spring, and if she does, she'll be able to earn from six to eight dollars."

"Do you ever go to any amusements?"

"Oh, yes; I go to a lecture at the Cooper Institute once in a while, Mary and I, with Peter;" then the girl stopped suddenly and her face flushed up.

Weathers felt a violent attack of jealousy seize upon him.

"Peter! Who's Peter, and what makes your face so red?"

"Why, Peter is the porter where I work; he lives down-stairs, and all the girls make fun of me about Peter, saying he's my beau, and they've got me so that I can hardly bear the sight of him; but there's another Peter that I love, though," and Chocolate made a dive behind the stove and produced a lanky, sleepy-looking gray-and-white cat. "This is the Peter that I like, and you ought to see us play on the floor sometimes. I know it isn't very ladylike, but it's real good fun. Do you know, I'm afraid to whip Peter, even when he's bad, for fear that he won't love me."

Then she held the cat up to her and caressed it with her cheek. Weathers envied the cat. And so the evening passed away.

At ten o'clock, the two young men departed, agreeing to return in three nights with the measures for the shirts.

"Oh, I'm a fool!" Stewart muttered, as they descended into the street.

"How so?"

"I love this girl."

"Well, then, I'm another, for Chocolate has captured me!" Weathers rejoined, with droll seriousness.

CHAPTER VIII. JOHN BLAINE AGAIN.

ERNESTINE recognized the face and form reflected in the large mirror in an instant. She had not forgotten John Blaine, though years had come and gone since she had looked upon him.

Blaine was dressed in a plain, dark suit, and stood in the center of the room, apparently listening, as if to ascertain whether there was any likelihood of anybody else entering the apartment.

His mind satisfied on that score, he turned his attention to the girl. A single glance he gave at the mirror, and in the pale face and horror-stricken eyes reflected there, he plainly read that his presence in the room was known.

"Ernestine," he said, in a low, cautious tone, as if afraid that the very walls might overhear and denounce him.

Slowly, like one under the fascination of some terrible spell, the girl wheeled around in her chair and faced him.

"You remember me?" he asked, as if half in doubt.

"John Blaine." Slowly and sadly the words came from the white lips.

"You have dismissed your maid for the night?" he questioned.

"Yes."

"Is there any probability of her returning?"

"No."

Painful was the effort to speak, and the voice of the fair young girl sounded hoarse and unnatural.

"Is there any one else in the house that is likely to come to-night before you go to bed?"

"I—I think not."

A moment John Blaine looked at the white, horror-stricken face, and a touch of pity moved even his iron-like heart.

"Don't fear," he said, slowly; "there is no danger. Why, what are you staring at? Your face is as white as a sheet. Do I look like a ghost, or does the very sight of me chill the blood in your veins?"

"Yes," the girl answered, slowly.

He looked at her for a moment in a way that plainly showed that he was annoyed at the frank expression. Then, as a sudden thought seemed to come to him, he went with noiseless steps to the door and turned the key softly in the lock.

"There, now we are safe from interruption," he said, and he took a chair from its place by the wall, drew it to the center of the room and sat down, facing the girl.

She never moved; had it not been for the tremulous breath that swayed the soft, white bosom up and down, one might have imagined that it was a woman of wax who sat within the embrace of the arm-chair, so white were her features, so motionless her figure.

"I have been hiding in the closet waiting for you to come up," he said, as if in explanation.

"I suppose that my appearance here to-night is something of a surprise to you?"

"No." The word came softly yet coldly from the white, wax-like lips. The girl's face, her voice and the quivering bosom all revealed how intense was the agony which she was enduring.

"Ernestine," and his voice, ever low and musical, now became doubly so, as he spoke with tender expression, "poor child, do not fear me." And he moved his chair nearer to the girl and took her soft, white palms in his.

There was but little contrast between the jeweled fingers of the dainty woman and the taper, girl-like hands of the escaped convict.

His touch sent a cold shiver through her frame, and a long-drawn breath came from her lips.

"You are in an agony of fear," he said, slowly.

"Yes," she murmured.

"At my presence?"

"Yes," again the low, expressionless reply.

"Why should you fear me? Do you think that I come to do you harm?" he questioned, abruptly.

She shook her head.

"You are right; I love you too well to think of harming you," he said, quietly. "You say that my appearance here to-night did not surprise you, and yet it is nearly five years since we have met."

"I saw the newspaper which contained an account of your escape," she answered, slowly, and speaking only with a great effort.

"And you naturally thought that I would pay you a visit, eh?"

"Yes."

"You were quite correct in your calculation, and now I suppose you can guess why I have come?"

Again the girl bowed her head in assent.

"It's a ticklish job to get at you," Blaine said, reflectively. "I did not want to come to the front door and inquire for you, for I am not exactly dressed in the style required by fashionable society. I thought, too, that the chances were ten to one that I should not be able to gain admittance to you, and even if I had, for a shabbily-dressed fellow like myself to have called upon you, might have given rise to remarks, and just at the present time, I am not desirous of attracting any attention to myself. There are some inquisitive gentlemen in New

York who would give a trifle to lay their eyes upon me just about this time. I have become a wolf now, and prefer the night to the day. By the way, hasn't it been a source of wonder to you as to what had become of me during all these years?"

"I thought that you were dead," she replied.

"Men of my stamp never die; they are like a cat, gifted with nine lives, and like that animal too, when they fall, they generally land upon their feet. No door ever yet closed upon me in this world, but that another one opened to receive me on the instant. As you will perceive, I had good reason for not ringing at your door, so I quietly watched my opportunity and sneaked in by the alley. I knew the house of old, though it is five years ago since I set foot in it, and I managed to get up-stairs to this room without being seen by a single soul. You were absent. I heard the sound of music coming from the parlor and naturally guessed that you were there; so, I concealed myself in your closet and waited for you to come. Your maid came within an ace of discovering me once, too, which would have given rise to a very unpleasant affair; but, luckily, I had got behind the dresses at the further end of the closet and so escaped her observation. Let me see," and he looked around him thoughtfully, "it was in this very room that I bid you good-by, wasn't it? How well I remember it. Ernestine, you were a beauty then, though hardly more than a child, but you were a woman in sense and intelligence. The few years that have passed have not changed you a great deal, my beauty."

And, as he finished his speech, he leaned forward, took her cheeks between his palms, drew her head down to him and kissed the full, rich lips, that were wont to be so red and were now so white.

Submissive as a child, she yielded to his caress, and yet had her will been consulted, the embrace of the coiling serpent would have been far more welcome.

"You're a good girl," Blaine said, the fascinating, winning smile, that was so dangerous, upon his face, and then his hand toyed carelessly with the shining, golden locks that floated down over the girl's shoulders. "By the by, where were you about two years ago? Were you out of the city?"

"Two years?" and the girl reflected; "yes, in Europe. I returned about eighteen months ago."

"Ah, that accounts for it," Blaine said, thoughtfully. "I mean that that accounts for my not being able to reach you. I was about two years ago I was sent to Sing-Sing," then he noticed the slight shudder that quivered through the girl's frame, and guessed the cause. "Oh, I was innocent of the crime charged upon me," he cried, quickly. "But at that time, I was taken at a disadvantage. I had run out of money; you were away, and, in fact, I had no friend at hand who would aid me, so by false swearing and lack of funds on my part to fee skillful lawyers, I got five years in Sing-Sing. But, like Jack Sheppard, the prison's not yet built that can hold me. A friend came back; I had left a message for that friend who was faithful to the trust, and so, with gold, I cut a way through iron bars and a stone wall. And now I come to you for assistance."

"To me?"

"Yes; who else should I come to?" he asked, meaningly.

"True," and the fair head sunk down in despair.

"Oh, come, cheer up," he said, again caressing the golden hair; "a few hours at most and I will take the dark cloud of my presence from the sunlight of your life."

A deep sigh from the girl's lips was the only answer.

"And now I'll tell you what I want. The detectives are on my track; the man that escaped with me has been recaptured and blabbed all he knew in regard to my disguise and purposes. I have come into this house, John Blaine; I must go out as somebody else. The bloodhounds are close upon me, and I must elude them on them or I am lost. This house is an asylum to one person; I gained it, they will never think of looking for me here. Desperate convicts do not usually select Madison avenue palaces as hiding-places. I must remain here with you to-night, and to-morrow you must find me some place where I can remain concealed for a few days until the present hot chase is over and the scent is cold. In the mean time you can go out and procure me a disguise; then I want a thousand dollars or so to take me out of the country. It will be a very cheap way of getting rid of me, my dear. Don't trouble yourself about my accommodation here to-night. Just give me one of the pillows from the bed, and I will camp down here on the sofa; it will be far more comfortable than my convict's bunk at Sing-Sing. You can watch over me while I sleep, and, mind, if I am discovered, it's Sing-Sing and hard labor for three years."

Blaine rose from his seat, took a pillow from the bed and adjusted it upon the lounge, then extended himself upon it. The girl never stirred from her place, but remained motionless as a statue.

"Now, go into your dressing-room, put on a wrapper, then lie down on your bed. Your face in the morning must not betray that you have passed a sleepless night."

The girl obeyed without a word.

When she came from the dressing-room, the costly silk changed for a loose dress, again he spoke.

"Come and kiss me good-night, then turn down the gas, and go to sleep if you can."

Twenty minutes later John Blaine slept as calmly as a child, while Ernestine, with an aching heart, prayed for the morning to come.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 197.)

Parrots.—A parrot belonging to some friends of mine was generally taken out of the room when the family assembled for prayers, for fear lest he might join irreverently in the responses. One evening, however, his presence happened to be unnoticed, and, for some time, he maintained a decorous silence; but, at length, instead of "Amen," out he came with "Cheer, boys, cheer!" On this the butler was directed to remove him, and had got as far as the door, when the bird, perhaps thinking that he had committed himself, and had better apologize, called out, "Sorry I spoke!" The parrot of an relation of mine also used, whenever he dropped anything he was eating, to say, "Pick up Bobby's crust," being doubtless prompted by the same train of associations as those which led another parrot, which I knew well, invariably to say, "Thank you," whenever any thing was given to him. Some parrot-fanciers had agreed to meet in a year's time, when each was to show a bird for a prize—proficiency in talking to be the great criterion of merit. On the day appointed all the rest came, each duly bringing his parrot. Only one appeared without his saying that he was such a stupid bird he was quite ashamed to bring him. This excuse was held to be inadmissible, and his master accordingly went off for and returned with him. No sooner was he introduced than, looking round at the large assembly of birds, he exclaimed, "My God, what a lot of parrots!" The prize was immediately voted to him by acclamation.

MAGDALEN.

BY ST. ELMO.

The still moonbeams cast
A pale, cold glory o'er the drooping flowers,
Bringing from out the weary past,
Some happy hours.

The tinted dewdrops fall,
And leave upon the trembling earth their mark;
The stars in beauty shine, and all
To me is dark.

The gentle breezes play
Across the ripples of the quiet lake;
The mountains kiss the stars, and day
Will soon awake.

I would that I could die;
For, mingled with the pale white rain of tears,
That burn deep in my heart, I try
To crush my fears.

But what would it avail?
I know my soul would still be stamped with sin;
Would that these moonbeams soft and pale,
Had never been.

Then I might never know
The heart, sad thoughts this night has brought
To life,
But follow on in paths of woe,
And bitter strife.

And yet, why should I live,
To sell my soul each night for daily bread?
But still I trust that He'll forgive
Me when I'm dead.

Alas, I still must meet
The scornful looks and savage jeers of those
I pass upon the crowded street,
My human foes.

Once I was fair and pure,
But listened to the tempter's wile and fell,
And now, my spirit must endure
The pangs of Hell.

And they who turn aside
Fearful of contact with the outcast one,
I wonder if their hearts are tied
To pity none?

Well, it must ever be,
Until I sink beneath the woe and care,
That bears me down into the sea
Of dark despair.

I crave the tears of none,
And when I sink unto my final rest,
I wonder if there will be one
To call me blest?

Old Hurricane:

OR,
THE DUMB SPY OF THE DES MOINES.

A ROMANCE OF THE BLACK-HAWK LANDS.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "HAWKEYE HARRY," "BOY SPY," "IRON-SIDES, THE SOUTHERN," "DEATH-NOTCH, THE DESTROYER," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IX.

TWO ANGELS.

It will be remembered that Noisy Nat and three of the claim-stakers were sent to bring up the train belonging to the party, and that they were expected to return on the day following their departure. The time allotted for the party's return went by, but they did not come. Two days passed without their appearance, and now misgivings of a serious nature began to rise. During the two days of waiting the claim-stakers had lain inactive for want of necessary tools to begin their fort. Besides, their whereabouts had become known to the robbers and Indians, and it required all the stratagem the Dumb Spy could employ to keep them on the wrong trail.

The train not having made its appearance on the third day after Nat's departure, the fears of the party assumed an active form, and it was decided to send out a second party to investigate the cause of the train's non-appearance.

Old Hurricane and Harry Dudley volunteered their services for the trip, and the two took their departure, going in a north-westerly direction.

Their course, after leaving the Des Moines timber, lay through a rough and hilly section of country, covered with a dense growth of red brush, and diversified with small, murmuring water-courses.

Toward the close of the day, Old Hurricane informed his companion that they were drawing near the western boundary of the Black-Hawk Purchase, and that about six miles north of where they would touch the line was the point where the claim-stakers had left their train.

"I do not know whether I'll be able to make the trip, or not," said young Dudley, with a look of fatigue.

"Why, lad, I'm just gettin' warmed up; but, then, I'm used to it," said the old hunter.

"I presume there is no one living through these parts?" said Dudley, impressed with the desolate solitude of the surrounding hills, over which the shadows of twilight were stealing.

"Yes, Harry," replied the old borderman, "off hereabouts there are two cabins. That's two families livin' there, but I've allers been a little juberous of them. They've too much intercourse with them Dispute fellers. But, I swear, lad, that's some fine-yea, angel-lookin' gals' round there. I know they're out of their place, too, just as much as a rose would be among a bed of Canada thistles."

This information did not kindle a spark of enthusiasm in Harry's breast. The words of the hunter fell with indifference on his ears, while with most young men it would have stirred a spirit of adventure. But Harry had reason for his passive demeanor. A secret locked within his young heart excluded all other emotions in which a woman's face or charms were concerned.

The two journeyed on. It was near sunset when the keen eye of Old Hurricane detected a thin column of white smoke curling heavenward from a patch of bushes that crowned an adjacent bluff.

A halt was at once made.

"I must inquire into that smoke, Harry, here-abouts," said Old Hurricane. "It may be friends and it may not. We hunters never let ourselves into danger with our eyes open, tho' familiarity with dangers often blunts one's sensibilities. I'll just make a *devoir* there-abouts, and, if it's friends, I'll signal to you from yander bald ridge. If it's enemies, I'll slip back here again," and the next moment the form of the hunter was lost to view among the dense shrubbery.

Harry now had a moment for mental speculation, but a keen sense of his loneliness impressed his mind so forcibly as to create a desire for a more perfect view of his surrounding, and, ascending a little knoll, he dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground, and pushing back his hat to allow the breeze to fan his heated brow, he swept the landscape.

Behind him, to his left, and in front, rough wooded hills shut off a distant view, but down the valley, to his right, he could see where the hills melted into a level plain, that rolled away westward for weary leagues. He could see small streams, now glimmering in the rays of the setting sun, winding with the sinuosity of a serpent across the bosom of the green expanse; and, while he stood gazing upon this scene, he suddenly caught sight of two cabins

standing close in under the shadows of the bluffs, where the prairie began.

The young surveyor felt certain they were the same cabins of which Old Hurricane had made mention, for he saw, by the smoke rising from the chimney tops, that they were occupied.

While he stood watching for other signs of life about the cabins, the sound of voices and the tramp of approaching feet arrested his attention.

Turning, he saw two men coming down the valley toward him. There was a rough, brigandish look about their features, dress and movements that impressed Harry with no favorable opinion of them, and so he at once concealed himself in a clump of bushes.

The men came on, talking in unguarded tones as men will talk in conflict of opinions. Harry bent his ear and listened. One of them was saying:

"No, this thing's run on long enough. Mobile. Fur three years we've been dilly-dallyin' along about the price of that girl; but I'll not give a red more than I've offered; and ten to one that fellow will git wind of her being in these diggin's, and then we'll have her stolen from both of us."

From this Harry gleaned that a girl was being sold by one of the villains to the other. He listened for Mobile's reply. He heard him say:

"Your talk 'bout that feller, Thoms, will have little bearin' on my decision, for I won't scare. However, I guess you can take her at your figures, and, I tell you, she's devilish cheap, for thar's not a purtier face this side of the Mississippi. If she war my own chick, cussed if you'd git'er fur twic' that price. She and Dolly are out ridin' now.

ter, and in his belt was a knife and brace of pistols, while against the trunk of the tree under which he waited, leaned a handsome rifle.

As the moments stole on, the little figure of a female glided from the dense shadows of the undergrowth, and approached the impatient youth.

The young hunter clasped the figure in his arms; and as he pushed back the shawl that was thrown hood-like over her head, he gazed into the rosy, dimpled face and dark lustrous eyes of Dolly Mobile, his betrothed.

"Still true to me as ever, my darling little girl!" the impulsive youth said, imprinting a kiss on her fair brow.

"Why shouldn't I be, Ransom?" she said, in a soft, flute-like tone, as her little dimpled hand stole slyly into his hair and palm.

"Oh, they say women are fickle," he replied. "Some may be; just like the men; but not I, Ransom."

"I thank Heaven for it, Dolly," he replied, joyfully, "for you are all I have in this world to love, and I hope your father has consented to allow me to visit you at his house."

"No, he is obstinate—more so than ever; and to-day I have been very miserable, indeed, and yet I have been happy."

"Why so, Dolly?"

"I have been miserable to learn that Abel Mobile is not my father, and happy, too, to know that I am not the child of such a bad and wicked man."

"Bad and wicked!" repeated Ransom; "I did not think he was worse than the usual border settler. All are more or less reckless and rough."

"I know it, Ransom, but most of them carry an honest heart, and this Abel Mobile does not. He is leagued with the outlaws of the Dispute, and he has actually sold poor Dora to Cale Thoms, of Spain, and has received gold for her. She is to be taken away to-morrow."

"Great Heaven! is this possible? Are you not mistaken, Dolly?"

"I am not, Ransom; and you are to hear the worst yet; there was a man named Jack Hupp here yesterday, to buy me."

"Oh, God!" groaned the young ranger; "Abel Mobile must be a human monster! But tell me, Dolly, what was the result of the interview of Hupp and Mobile?"

"The bargain was not closed. They stood on a difference of a few dollars. But Hupp was to be back soon, and then, Ransom, I fear the result will go against me."

"Then Mobile is neither your father, nor Dora's?"

"No. Dora is the child of his wife's sister, and I am the child of his first wife, who was a widow when he married her; so he is only a stepfather, and a cruel one, too. When we moved from Montrose here, he kidnapped Dora and brought her along; and don't you think, Ransom, she was to have been married a week afterward to a young man of whom she talks a great deal."

"And why has she never attempted to escape?"

"She is afraid to. She is watched and threatened with all kinds of punishments. Besides, she has given up in despair of ever meeting her lover again."

"This is a hundred-fold worse than I could ever have dreamed of Abel Mobile. Speculating in human lives—selling innocent girls to brutal robbers—Dolly, you and Dora both must go with me—you must be saved from these villains' power. I will take you to the settlement, about fifty miles north of here. There you will find friends and safety. You must go, Dolly; I will listen to no protest."

"But if I should consent, and we be caught in our flight—oh, Ransom! I shudder to think what the forfeit will be."

"Once clear of these hills, Dolly, and I defy the power of Abel Mobile to get us. My horse is near here, and you and Dora can ride, and I will walk and lead the way."

"But, you forget Mobile's hounds, Ransom," she said.

"I care not for them. I can manage them, Dolly; so go now, and state the matter to Dora, and tell her to come with you at once."

"Oh, Ransom! Ransom!" Dolly cried, hesitating between a sense of right and wrong; "this is a dangerous, and, I fear, an imprudent step for me to take, is it not, Ransom?"

"No, Dolly, it is a step that duty necessitates, for if you remain here, your young life now so free and innocent will be brought to shame and suffering. Do not be afraid of being caught, though if our old friend Hurricane was here now—"

"Then, Ransom, our chances of escape would be good," interrupted Dolly; "yes, I do wish Uncle Hurricane would happen along—"

"I'm right here, my dear youngsters, and have been for the last half-hour."

The lovers started at sound of the voice, but when they recognized it as that of the object of their wishes, Old Hurricane, their fears turned to joy; and the next moment the old hunter and Harry Dudley stepped from the shadows of the undergrowth before them.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" cried Dolly.

"Your coming has been just in the right hour, this time, Hurricane," said Ransom.

"I presume so, youngster," said the old hunter. "This chap is my friend, Harry Dudley."

Harry Dudley cried Dolly: "that is his name—the name of Dora's lover!"

"Pardon me, Miss Dolly," said Dudley, apologetically, "but we have had the extreme impudence to permit ourselves to be eavesdroppers to your interview. I have heard your story about Dora. Now, while Abel Mobile and his companions are reveling in a drunken spree, pray, will you not see Dora and tell her Harry Dudley awaits an interview with her? Tell her I discovered her whereabouts by accident, and am here to save her."

Wild with excitement and joy, Dolly flattered away into the shadows toward the cabins, eager to deliver her message to Dora.

The trio, waiting under the oak, planned the course for their flight with the maidens, and it was at once decided to seek the camp of the claim-stakers, until something further was determined upon.

The minutes wore by. It was nearly time for the maidens' coming, when a silence that was unnatural in its intensity settled over the premises. This was suddenly succeeded by the shrieks of female voices calling for help, mingled with fierce, brutal execrations.

Full well the trio under the oak knew its meaning. The maidens had been captured in their attempted flight.

"Great God, Hurricane, they must be rescued!" cried Dudley, almost frantic.

"Yes, if we have to take them dead," added the Boy Ranger.

"Take it cool, lads. We'll not leave these diggins without 'em gals. Come, let's move right into the cabin after they harm them."

Noislessly the three glided from under the oak and approached the cabin of Abel Mobile. At the door they paused. They heard the weeping and sobbing of the maidens and threats and execrations of Mobile.

"Stay right here, boys, till I call you," said Old Hurricane; then turning, he pushed the door open and strode unceremoniously into the room.

"What the cats is up in here?" he exclaimed, in his usual stormy tone, as he planted himself in the middle of the floor, and gazing about in well-affected wonder, took in the situation.

He saw the maidens locked in each other's embrace, seated on a bench in one corner. Abel Mobile stood near them with the shawls which he had just torn from the girls' shoulders, laying on his arm, while Cale Thoms and another man, whom the hunter recognized as the notorious Jack Hupp, sat on the opposite side of the room with a drunken leer on their besotted, bloated features.

At sight of Old Hurricane, who had swept like a tornado into the cabin, Mobile ceased his cursing, and turning, confronted the intruder with a savage frown; but, when he saw who it was before him, his features assumed a different expression.

"Ho, Hurricane, ole friend," he exclaimed, with well-affected pleasure on meeting him; "be seated, man, be seated!"

"I declare I thought the house was afire, I heard such a noise in here," replied the hunter, declining the proffered seat, "and so I just dropped in to quire into the matter."

"Oh, it's all right now, Hurricane. I war jist lecturin' them runaway gals; devilish impudent little tigers to go lopin' around through the woods arter night—away from their paternal roof."

The maidens having calmed their emotions and discovered who the intruder was, sprung across the room to his side, and clasping him by the hands, cried out:

"Oh, Uncle Hurricane! save us from those bad, wicked men!"

"Now, I'll swar to goodness if this don't beat me!" exclaimed the hunter, with well-affected surprise; "two little angels flutterin' at my side and beggin' me to save 'em. What's it mean, Abel?"

Mobile started with an oath and vindictive look toward the maidens, but the old hunter interposed his hand, saying:

"Hold on, Abel, hold on; let's have an explanation of matters. Stand back, Abel; an explanation is wanted."

"He has sold me to that drunken robber!" cried Dora, flashing a wild, terrified look upon Thoms. "Oh, I pray you will save us, Uncle Hurricane!"

"So, ho!" exclaimed the old hunter, in a thunderous tone, "then this is an auction-room, eh? Here's where such angels as these are bought and sold, eh? Shades of the Patriarchs! An auction-room! Well, I'll take both of these little buds, and go a cool thousand better than the best. Now look sharp, men; who bids higher? Going, going, going."

The voice of the giant hunter sounded like that of a trumpet, yet there was that in its intonations that inspired the hearts of those two fair girls nestling at his side with hope, while it seemed to strike awe to the cowardly hearts of the outlaws.

"Let him pay his thousand better and take them, Mobile," said Thoms, with a significant wink which the old hunter saw and interpreted.

"No, I can't pay the cash down to-night, gentlemen," said the hunter; "but I'll give good security; I'll give you Ransom Kendall, the Boy Ranger, and Harry Dudley, claim-stakers. Both are choice fellows—good as gold, itself."

"You're inclined to jest, Hurricane," said Mobile, endeavoring to smooth matters over.

"No, I'm in downright earnest—I am, by the gods of Olympus, Abel."

"Then," said Mobile, heating up with rage, "you will leave here at once."

"Well, the girls will have to go with me."

"They shall not!" barked the infuriated outlaw, springing forward like a tiger to seize the girls. But one blow from the open hand of Hurricane sent the villain waiting to the other side of the room in a twinkling.

"Run out, gals, the boys are waitin' for you at the door," said the hunter, and as the maidens hastened to obey his injunction, he braced himself against the wall to meet the attack of Mobile and his companions, who had now rushed to his—Mobile's—assistance. Swift as the lightning's flash the giant piled his fist among the villains, and for a moment a wild confusion reigned. Blows, falling bodies thumping on the floor, yells and execrations filled the air.

The desperation with which the outlaws concentrated all their strength in the effort to overpower the Colossus, proved their own final defeat, for, as they rushed madly upon him, he eluded their grasps and knocked them right and left, and in less than a minute he had all three of them floored. Then, springing across the room, he blew out the light and glided from the room.

"Away, youngsters!" he exclaimed, to the four young people who stood near, almost unconscious of what was going on around them, so deeply were they plunged into the silent raptures of love; "away, youngsters, and I'll cover your retreat."

The young people at once hurried away in the direction of the point where Ransom had left his horse, while Old Hurricane remained at the door of the cabin listening to the confusion within, his whole frame fairly convulsed with suppressed laughter. The outlaws, not knowing he had escaped from the room, had got to fighting among themselves, each one supposing the other was the hunter. But they soon discovered their ludicrous mistake, then, as they came charging from the cabin, Old Hurricane beat a hasty retreat around an angle of the building and stopped to listen.

"They've escaped, Mobile, they've escaped," he heard Thoms exclaim; "but, get out your bloodhounds and we'll trail them to perdition, but what we catch them! Hurry, Mobile, hurry; bring out your hounds while the trail is fresh!"

CHAPTER XI. THE WRONG BODY.

OLD HURRICANE shuddered when he heard the deep bay of the bloodhounds as their brutal master brought them from the kennel. As near as he could judge by the sound, there were four of the dogs, and the number he knew was sufficient to endanger the lives of the young fugitives. Even if the outlaw did not turn them loose upon the trail, they would lead them so fast that the fugitives would soon be overtaken. Something must be done at once to avert the fate of the hunter. But what should it be?

The old hunter asked himself the question and pondered over it. He knew there would be but little chance of throwing the hounds off the trail when once upon it, and so he concluded to rejoin the fugitives, put them on their guard and prepare for the worst.

He turned and moved away into the thicket north of Mobile's cabin, hoping to intercept his friends by a circuitous route near the oak where he first met Ransom and Dolly.

Before he had reached the tree, however, the prolonged blast of a horn rung in startling notes out upon the air. The sound emanated from the rear of Mobile's cabin, and its import was at once made manifest to the old borderman when he heard it answered by a shrill whistle, coming from the top of the very knoll where he had seen a small party of Indians encamped.

He knew at once there was a preconcerted system of telegraphy existing between the outlaws and the Indians—that the former were calling their red allies to their assistance. The savages, added to the bloodhounds, would render the peril of the fugitives imminent, and so, quickening his pace, the hunter pressed on.

Arrived at the oak, he was greatly disappointed at not finding his friends there. He uttered a low whistle in hopes it would reach their ears and elicit a response that would direct him aright. A deep silence succeeded his call. There was no response, nor could he hear a sound, nor discover a sign by which he could determine the course taken by the fugitives. However, there was no time for speculation, and the natural presumption forced itself at once upon his mind that they had gone east toward the river, as had formerly been decided upon, and so he moved briskly away in that direction, expecting to come up with them. But an hour's walk found him still alone.

He was now several miles from the cabins of the outlaws, and scarcely knowing what course to pursue next, he stopped to listen. If he could only hear the baying of the hounds, this he thought, might give him some clue to the course taken by his friends. But he could hear nothing. A deep and unnatural silence brooded over the woodland, but this was suddenly succeeded by the sharp report of firearms, mingled with piercing screams, wild, savage yells and fierce, brutal execrations.

These sounds came from not over sixty rods from where the old borderman then stood, and they smote like a death-knell upon his ears.

"Too late! Too late!" he exclaimed to himself, as a pang of regret shot through his great breast; "they've been overtaken and all captured. Ah, me! it may go hard with the boys—they may be slain on the spot. But the girls—by the gods of Olympus, I'll make a Golgotha of Inga and robber-bones but what I rescue them angels! It's no use to whine now, but it were a bad thing when we separated at the cabins, for I may and may not have saved 'em all. And I expect they've been a little careless, and went blipin' and cooin' like lovers would do, through the darkness, and let themselves into a trap. But, Hurricane, move your stumps; you may be in time to render your friends some help."

He listened. He could still hear the sound of excited voices, but nothing by which he could determine the fate of his friends; so, with his rifle at a trail, he crept forward through the woods, stopping occasionally to listen. He soon discovered that these excited voices were stationary, and as he drew closer and closer to them, his practiced ear caught a sound like that of water dripping on dry leaves.

He stopped, and pressing his ear to the earth, listened intently. He could still hear that slow, mysterious drop, drop. What did it mean? The old hunter scratched his head in deep perplexity. For once in his life he heard a sound for which he could not account. But his curiosity overbalanced his superstition, and he determined to investigate the matter. So he crept silently forward and soon came to the edge of a little moonlit glade, on the margin of which he halted.

Before him lay an old log, and across this lay the half-nude form of an Indian warrior. He was dead, and from a wound in the head drops of blood were falling on a pile of dry leaves collected by the log.

The mystery stood explained, and the old borderman pushed boldly out into the glade and examined the body. He recognized the Indian by his enormous size, being fully as large as the hunter himself, as a notorious war-chief called Strong-Arm, and leader of the party he had seen encamped on the knoll near Mobile's cabin.

He knelt at once that this very spot was where his friends had been overtaken, and that Strong-Arm had been slain in the conflict that ensued. But the voices—now toned down—that he could hear were a few rods further south, and so he crept on and came to a halt within ear-shot of them. He heard a rough, rasping voice—which he readily detected as that of the infamous Abel Mobile—saying:

"Yes, my little ladies, you've got yourselves into a pretty muss by topin' off with these two young scamps, who'll hang for their part in the game."

From this Hurricane gleaned that both the maidens and their lovers had been recaptured.

"And now, Thoms," he heard Mobile continue, "as these little runaways'll not be safe at my cabin while that infernal big Hurricane goes unlung, we'll trot 'em right down to Spain."

"That's the place for 'keeps,'" Thoms exclaimed.

Mobile continued:

"Now, I'll run back home with these 'ere hounds, and bring a couple o' ponies to take the runaways on, fur it'll be a long walk for the likes o' them, tho' I'll warrant they'd 'a' walked to Halifax with these young freebooters."

"All right, Abel," Thoms responded; "we'll wait for you at the Two Oaks. You see, we've got to do a little hanging before we get rid of these two gal-thieves, and the Two Oaks, you know, is where such things are done."

"That's the talk, Cale Thoms," replied Mobile; "don't let the rascals pester us any further, but hang 'em, cuss 'em, hang 'em."

"What will you do with Strong-Arm's carcass, Inga?" Thoms now inquired of the four Indians that stood over Harry and Ransom with drawn tomahawks.

"We take body 'long," one of the Indians replied. "Strong-Arm great war-chief—chief and friends be angry if no take body to village—make litter—carry body on."

"Wal, it's no use to try to persuade 'em out o' takin' the body," Mobile said; "so now, Thoms, you and Hupp will have to look sharp. It will take all four o' the Ingins to tote the carcass o' Strong-Arm, and you'll have to take charge o' that pair o' young ladies and brace of gal-thieves. Mebby I'll be at the Two Oaks in time to help boost the gentlemen up."

"And I may be there, too, my dear Abel Mobile," mused Old Hurricane, as the outlaw turned and started on his return to his cabin with his hounds.

I will here remark that the dogs had not been turned loose upon the fugitives' trail, else the result would have been serious. They had been taken in check by their master, who, with his companions, followed at their heels at a rapid pace; and when the fugitives were overtaken, the fierce brutes were held back by the leash.

The old hunter could not see the parties, for they stood in among the densest shadows, but, from what he had heard, he learned this: Harry Dudley and Ransom Kendall were alive and unharmed. But they were prisoners, and were to be hung at the Two Oaks, a point well known to him and situated a mile further east. The girls were both captives also, and were to be taken to Spain for safe keeping. The captors, since Mobile's departure, numbered six, two outlaws and four Indians.

For some time the hunter argued with himself whether or not he should make a charge upon the foe and attempt his friends' release. But there were two obstacles in the way, either

one of which was sufficient to defeat him; and he knew that a failure on his part, in case he should make an attack, would precipitate the execution of Harry and Ransom. One of these obstacles was the overwhelming number of the foe, the other was the extreme darkness. However, had it not been for the latter, he would have made the daring attempt. As it was, however, he would have to watch his chances and do the best he could, for he could not bring help in time to save the boys now.

While waiting for the party to make some move, he heard Thoms say:

"Inga, if you are going to take Strong-Arm's body with you, it's time you were fixin' a litter to string it on."

"Ugh, the pale-face speaks the truth," one of the Indians replied. "Strong-Arm is heavy as he was brave, and it will take all his friends to carry him so far."

As the Indian concluded, the hunter heard the sound of footsteps moving away toward the body of the savage he had found lying across the log in the little glade, and, when they had passed him, he arose and followed softly after.

On the edge of the glade, where he could not be seen, he paused to watch, for his mind had become deeply engrossed with something of a novel character.

He saw the Indians lift Strong-Arm from the log where he had fallen before the pistol of the Boy Ranger, and lay him on the ground in the center of the glade. Then two of them took from their own shoulders blankets, in which the form of the chief was carefully wrapped from head to foot, with his rifle and tomahawk at his side. This done, one of the savages said, in his own dialect, which Old Hurricane readily understood, and which we translate thus:

"Let each of us go now and get strong poles to make a good, easy litter to carry our dead chief upon."

Then the old borderman saw them unloosen their tomahawks and depart into the dark woods in search of the desired poles.

Several minutes elapsed before they returned, then several more were consumed in constructing the litter. But, when it was at last completed, they lifted the heavy, lifeless body and placed it carefully and tenderly upon the movable couch.

Then a savage took his place at one of the corners of the litter and signified his friends to take their positions at the other corners. This done, the body was lifted aloft and borne slowly away.

Deluded red-skins! They little dreamed that the body they bore upon the litter was not that of their beloved chief, Strong-Arm, but the LIVING FORM OF THEIR MORTAL FOE, OLD HURRICANE, THE HUNTER!

CHAPTER XII.

OFF FOR THE TWO OAKS.

SLOWLY, and with solemn tread, the four savages moved away with the supposed lifeless body of their friend to where the two outlaws, Thoms and Hupp, were impatiently waiting for them. And had it not been for the dense brush crowding upon them and against the frame of the litter, they might have detected a slight, victory quiver of the same, caused by Old Hurricane's great form being in a convulsion of suppressed laughter over the success of the cunning trick he was imposing upon his red enemies.

The idea of substituting his form for that of Strong-Arm had been conceived the moment he saw the savages wrapping the chief's body in the blankets. He knew there was not difference enough in his own weight and that of the chief to lead the four savages to detect the imposition; consequently, the moment he saw the warriors depart in search of poles, he glided into the glade, hastily unwrapped and concealed the body of Strong-Arm out among the dense shadows. Then returning to the glade, he spread the two blankets on the ground, allowing them to lap a few inches. With his rifle and Strong-Arm's tomahawk at his side, he now proceeded to roll himself in the blankets.

This he effected with the best success by having down on one edge of the blanket and taking the lower corner between his feet, the middle in his hand, and the upper corner in his teeth, and rolling over and over, thereby wrapping the blanket around him as neatly as though the savages had done it themselves. The blankets being several inches longer than his body, every portion of his feet and head were concealed, and, having rolled himself to the exact spot where Strong-Arm had been left, he awaited the run of events.

Already we have shown the result of his trick so far as his escape from detection was concerned.

When the savages, with their burden, came to where the outlaws were in custody of the two maidens and their lovers, Thoms asked:

"Are you ready, Frogfoot?"

"Ugh," was the laconic reply of the Indian addressed.

"Then lead the way for the Two Oaks," the robber said; and as the Indians took their position in the lead, Thoms turned to the male captives and said: "and now you two gal-thieves will follow behind the Indians, and remember two pistols are right at your heads, cocked and primed."

Dora and Dolly were mounted upon the young ranger's horse, which was led behind by Jack Hupp; and the procession being now formed, at once set off through the woods.

A solemn silence now fell over the party—a silence as deep and solemn as a funeral cortege moving away through the lonely halls of the night. Perhaps, since the outlaws had had time for a moment's reflection, they had become impressed with that mournful spirit which the presence of death inspires in the hardest hearts, for the dark outlines of the motionless form on the litter was directly before their eyes.

If this was the case, a different feeling would have been inspired, had they suddenly become aware that old Hurricane was upon the litter.

"Well, well, Hurricane, this is a good 'un on the red-skins—perhaps the best you ever played on the varlets," the old borderman mused, as he was borne carefully on, every sinew stiffened to maintain the rigidity of a dead man, his teeth pressed upon his lips to keep back the stormy emotions that were surging within his breast, threatening to seek relief in open expression; "yes, it's a good 'un on the red gutters! How keenerly they tread—like pallbearers! Now, if Big-Foot war only here to whistle a dead march, or Yankee Doodle, what an imposin' pageant it would be! And, sweet Moses! what a soothin' effect it has on one's nerves, this gentle swayin' o' the bier! I swar, it's a leetle the softest thing I ever got a hold on—but, Lordy! wouldn't they drop me like a hot cake if they'd find out the joke?"

Thus the daring hunter mused with his own thoughts as he was carried on and on through the dark woods, the soft tread of his conductors' feet being the only sound that broke the solemn silence.

At length the party came to a halt, and the hunter felt himself lowered, and placed carefully upon the ground.

They were at the Two Oaks.

Leaving the captives in charge of the four savages, Thoms and Hupp proceeded to strike a fire under the two oaks. This they soon ac-

complished, and the great spreading boughs of the two gnarled oaks, and the smooth, grassy sward beneath, were lit up with a bright glow.

The young surveyor and Boy Ranger were at once lashed to one of the oaks, while the maidens were tied to a small sapling, not far from the litter upon which reposed the dead Strong-Arm.

The outlaws now turned upon the young men, and began taunting them with the most heartless, provoking language they could command. But not an expression of fear became visible upon the prisoners' brows. On the contrary, a look of cool, calm defiance met the gaze of their captors' eyes.

"Oh, my young hearties!" the brutal Hupp at last exclaimed, "we'll soon take the temper outen you!"

"Do your worst, you bloated wretch," replied the Boy Ranger, with a scornful flash of the eyes; "we will have the consolation of knowing while we do live that you'll get your dues at the hands of your master, the Devil."

"Frogfoot!" exclaimed the outlaw, enraged by the youth's words, "bring me the lariat attached to that saddle, and I'll string this impudent young rascal to one o' these limbs in a gif-y!"

The Indian brought the lariat, one end of which Hupp at once adjusted around the young ranger's neck.

Little Dolly seeing these preparations for the execution of her lover, began begging in a wild, despairing voice, for the robbers to spare his life. But the unnatural monsters only laughed at her appeals, and went on with the preparations for the execution. Dolly now burst forth in wild, frantic sobs and cries that rung tremulously through the forest like the wail of a lost spirit.

"Hupp!" exclaimed Thoms, indignantly, "stop that little wench's mouth. Her wild screams might bring that skulkin' big giant, Old Hurricane, upon us."

"Humph!" exclaimed Hupp, "I should think six of us could manage him, but," turning to Dolly—"see here, little woman, you must hush this noise. I'll stop your mouth with a kiss, so I will."

"Fiend, do not come near me!" she cried, fiercely, her eyes flashing with deadly scorn. "If you touch me, I pray Heaven will strike you dead!"

"Now I will have a kiss," the burly ruffian said, advancing and taking the pretty pale face of the maiden between his hard palms and stooping to kiss her.

Before he had accomplished his insulting design, he started back while a cry of agony wailed from his lips. With both hands he began clutching wildly at his breast, over which his shirt was tightly drawn, and from between his fingers, his friends, as well as the captives, saw a tiny stream of blood, spurting in crimson jets.

"Oh, God, I'm killed!" groaned the wretch, and staggering to and fro in vain attempts to keep his feet to the last, he finally fell like a log to the earth.

His friends ran to his side, and found he was dead! He had been stabbed in the breast with a broad-bladed knife. But who had dealt the blow? Was it the vengeance of Heaven invoked by Dolly?

A look of terror settled upon the features of Thoms and the warriors. Even the captives felt a shudder creep over them.

A silence deep as that of death settled over the place, and in the midst of it Dolly suddenly became conscious of a low, suppressed breathing behind her.

She mechanically turned her head and gazed around her. She saw nothing, for nothing was behind her but the motionless form in the blanket. Upon this, however, her attention was at length fixed, and she started with a chill of terror creeping over her, and her heart seemed to leap into her throat and choke her, when she discovered a pair of gleaming, scintillating eyes fixed upon her through small holes in the blanket, in which she supposed the dead savage lay wrapped!

Almost simultaneous with this discovery—before she could command utterance to speak, or cry out—she saw a sudden movement of the blanket, and the supposed lifeless form began rolling rapidly along the ground. A few evolutions freed the body of the old hunter from the enveloping folds of the blankets; then with a shout, equal to the roar of a lion, he sprang to his feet, and charged upon the astonished, terrified enemy.

"Down, down to the brimstone pit!" he roared, as he struck right and left. "Down, you essence of sin! Whoop! whoop!—hoof it, you cowardly guttersnipe!"

The last words were directed to Thoms, who, seeing his savage friends knocked in every direction, had turned and sought safety by flight into the forest.

The savages had been taken completely by surprise; and before they could recover from their terror in time to draw a weapon, the old hunter's iron right fist and heavy knife had sent them to earth, and the next moment Harry Dudley and the Boy Ranger were free.

Here let us drop the curtain over the scene that followed.

Ten minutes later, Old Hurricane, followed by the young surveyor, the Boy Ranger, and the two fair maidens—the latter mounted upon the youth's horse, were making their way eastward through the forest.

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Captain Mayne Reid's

SPECTER BARQUE;

The Last Entry on the Log,

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE SATURDAY JOURNAL.

Is a Serial of Sea and Surf Life, which is wonderfully unlike his other works, and yet is alive with the power of his wizard pen!

Written with all the fervor of his early productions, and stamped with the impress of his fine creative genius in its best mood, in his romance now announced we have the great story-teller in a field so new, and dealing with people and events so different from any of his former creations, that it will create great enthusiasm among the Captain's immense host of readers and friends. The work, we may say, is written exclusively for our columns, and will not appear, even in England, in serial form.

Our Arm-Chair.

Chat.—"Do tell me how to write acceptably for the press!" demands a disappointed but aspiring correspondent. Are we schoolmasters or philanthropists to be thus adjured? We are neither—we are only publishers and editors who select the best attainable matter and print it. Our office is not that of instructor in grammar, rhetoric, natural science, geography, etc., etc.—all of which are mere bases of the true authorial education. But, no mere education can give the imagination, the subtle knowledge of human nature, the power to arrange and plot, the heart of art that is involved in controlling human emotion. All that is born, not made. If education made the author, then what a fearful avalanche of authors we should have from our teeming colleges and schools! No; authorship is a gift—a rare gift—a most precious individual talent, and those only rise to renown who have it. Education is essential to its expression, but education can not give new mental and emotional attributes to the creature. Nature creates the true author; books and observation are but assistants in bringing out the great first gifts.

The *Coeymans Herald* advertises to the dishonorable practices of certain editors who not only neglect to give proper credit for matter copied, but, with a meanness incomprehensible, systematically expunge the author's name. The *Herald* says: "When an article is taken from a paper, that is original with it, credit should be given. This certainly ought to be the case with those papers that pay for their contributions." Common honesty demands that, certainly; but, when the pirate both refuses credit to appropriated matter, and carefully obliterated all indications of authorship, he becomes a contemptible thief. That is our view of it, and those who are hit may consider themselves *meant* to be singled out for the appellation—literary sneak-thieves.

We laymen have to speak in hushed voices when uttering words of disparage of the "ministry," but, surely, we need not be frightened at the sound of our own voices when the good old orthodox New York *Observer*, thunders away at this rate: "The age wants no half-baked ministers. The West will not hear them. The East can not hear them. The heathen know too much to take them. They are not wanted on this earth. To get money to educate dull boys because they are pious is robbing God and a fraud upon the church. It is a crime or a blunder, and sometimes both." That, wessay, is breaking the fine crockery with a big fist. But, we like it, nevertheless. The age wants neither stupidly nor narrow-mindedness, either in the pulpit or on the press. It demands, on the contrary, the very best talent the land can command to breast the great waves now surging over the intellectual sea, sweeping away old barriers like a flood, and inundating old ideas as the Nile in its overflow inundates Old Egypt. Common men with common minds in the pulpit, or in the literary world, are common nuisances, which the intelligence of the time demands shall be abated.

Another one of our contributors, having realized that "it is not good to be alone," has taken a life-lease on Matrimony Lane. This time it is Mr. Arnold Isler, of Columbus, Ohio—married to Miss Kate Warner. May their dreams be realities!

An English Correspondent (Mr. Charles Ollivant), not unknown to our readers as a contributor to these columns, in a note just received, thus adverts to Captain Mayne Reid and his new serial, written expressly for the SATURDAY JOURNAL:

"I am glad to learn that you have secured Capt. Mayne Reid to write another story for your excellent JOURNAL; and I can promise you that *The Specter Barque* will prove peculiarly fascinating—the plot being a very remarkable one, entirely new to literature—something that no brain but that of Mayne Reid could have conceived. I have lately been on a visit to Captain Reid, and therefore know all about it."

Captain Reid's many friends will rejoice at this announcement. Too long has his pen been at rest; but the renewed spirit with which he goes to work is ample compensation for his half-enforced silence. We are glad to learn that his health is much improved.

In Japan, we are told, the marriage ceremony is very simple—no expensive adjuncts, no commitments or subsequents. A man and his chosen one drink wine from the same cup, and the thing is done. Divorce is not a much more elaborate affair. The husband who is dissatisfied with his wife gives her a paper on which a few characters are traced, which usually say: "I am dissatisfied with you," or "I see you are dissatisfied," and "I therefore release you from your obligations. Depart in peace." Until this discharge is given the marriage bond is held as sacred, and a violation of it is very rare. Some of our "progressives" would very much like to have us *Japanned*, we suppose. Make marriage a mere arrangement; make divorce a mere dissolution of a contract, and you are *Japanned*. The Japs, to be sure, are heathen, but what of that?

—Never cut loose from your moorings until as-

ured the coast is clear," is a very good principle of action, either for girls who propose to marry and leave their paternal roof, or for young men who, having arrived at "lawful age," are about leaving home to try their fortunes in some life-calling. "Have you never observed a parrot," said Thiers, "when about to come down from his perch, how he holds hard by his beak, and feels about with his foot, but never lets go with the beak until the foot is firmly secured? I am the parrot." Thiers is a very wise old man, and if he really said this he is fit to govern the French. He wants his foothold secure before he tries a new venture. That's the acme of wisdom.

Complaints against the present management of the mails are becoming so general and bitter that some change in that management will be forced by public sentiment. The mails, according to the present magnates in temporary possession of the Department, were not made for the convenience of the people, nor are the laws of Congress of any force where a "ruling" is called for. In the matter of sending by the mails, as heretofore, seeds, cuttings, etc., the seedsmen are estopped by the preposterous "ruling" that the package must be open at both ends and not tied securely, in order that each postmaster may see just what is in the package. If any thing can be more absurd and directly in contravention of the postal law, it is the "ruling" that the words "Book MS." on the wrapper subjects the package to full letter postage! and, as the publisher refuses to receive packages with charges, the author has the pleasant knowledge to comfort him that his valuable work has been sent to the Dead Letter Office, never again to reappear. These instances are but representative ones, showing how the Department is conducted. A change of "fossil" is imperative, Mr. President, if you would "see the laws justly and properly administered."

The *American Journalist* don't like the "patent outsiders" papers. It thus growls: "If 'patent outsiders' grow in number as they have grown in the past three years, the ratio of increase will cause them to exceed all other newspapers in ten years. Adulteration of liquors is bad—what must it be when applied to our most cherished home literature?" Now, we think, as compared with the "inside" matter of these papers, the outsiders are a great addition to home literature, and we hope the enterprise of printing admirable papers for ill-patronized country editors and publishers may continue to grow until there is not a "poor paper" in the land!

The ideas of good Bishop Hall, the Ancient, are admirable, regarding the proprieties of dress and fashion, that we like to read to them occasionally. To our readers we say—adopt the Bishop's "Golden Maxims," viz.: "In thy apparel avoid profuseness, singularity and gaudiness; let it be decent, and suited to the quality of thy place and purse. Too much punctuality and too much modesty are the extremes of pride. Be neither too early in the fashion, nor too long out of it, nor too precisely in it. What custom hath civilized hath been decent; until then it was ridiculous. Where the eye is the jury, thy apparel is the evidence. The body is the shell of the soul, apparel is the husk of that shell, and the husk will often tell you what the kernel is. Seldom doth solid wisdom dwell under fantastic apparel; neither will the pantofole fancy be insured within the walls of grave habit. The fool is known by his pied coat."

What can be more suggestive or pertinent. This devout man, it will be perceived, sustains fashion as fit and proper enough; he only demands that it shall not outrage good taste and good sense. So true is that the dress is a reflex of the person, that the lady or man who is a devotee to fashion, and changes apparel with every way of the fashion-monger's *balon*, is rated as insurance-men rate furniture stores—"very risky." Too much attention to clothes is a sign of rapidity—too little a sign of slovenliness.

WHICH IS BEST?

You know, young gentlemen, Eve don't scold you very often, so you must bear it with a good grace when she does take up her pen for your good. You know she's got a brother Tom, and she'll tell you to just as though you were all his brother Toms to her.

I think you have a great deal of foolish pride about the occupations you desire to follow. You look on a trade as low, and as though it were degrading, yet consider a clerk's situation a place to be envied. What excuse can you give for such assumption?

If you are a clerk you can dress well, curl your hair prettily, smile in an irresistible manner at the young lady customers, I know. But do these pleasures do you any good? They surely do not fit you for the battle of life. You may draw a good salary, and while that salary lasts, be able to support yourself in decent style, but when business is at a standstill, and merchants are discharging their clerks, what is to become of you then?

While you are running around here and there, hither and yon, for a clerkship, your wiser brother, who learned a trade, will still be "pegging away," and make money by so doing. Your time will be wasted while his will be profitably employed, and which will be the happier at last?

In any of our large cities you will find hundreds of young men out of employment, simply because they can not obtain a clerkship, and look upon a trade as only fit for common folks. Common folks, indeed! A young man out of pocket, owing money for board, sponging out the real workers of the world, feeling himself above learning a trade, talking about common folks! Why, he is the most common of them all, and a common humping at that.

And when you have a good trade, eling to it, and don't, as a gentleman of my acquaintance once did, leave substance to hunt after shadows. He discovered—that no one else ever did for him—that he was necessary to the musical community as a vocalist, and that the public were being deprived of a rare treat by his secluding himself at his trade.

He threw up his good situation, and gave some concerts on his own responsibility, which proved to be total failures. Not content, he connected himself with various troupes, but they either suspended or cheated him out of his salary. Even up to this day he still holds on to the idea that a fortune is in store for him. This man is constantly in debt, and his family live in any thing but decent style; whereas, if he would return to his trade, he would soon have a comfortable home for them, and be blessed with, not only the necessities, but the luxuries of life. Don't you think that man is worse than a fool? I do.

Farmers' boys are impressed favorably with their first visit to the city, and think it must be the ultimatum of happiness to be a resident of it; so they leave the good old farm and go into a store. They may say they are happier for the change, but I know they can not be; they are too stubborn to acknowledge they have made a mistake.

A friend of mine having shown much literary talent, had an idea of giving up his farm, and devoting himself exclusively to writing for the papers. I was happy, however, to learn that he had not done so, and asked him the reason of his decision.

"To tell you the truth, Eve," he said, "I think farming will be better for me, for, should I not find a market for my products, I can eat

them myself, which I could not do with rejected manuscripts. They would be rather unpalatable food."

Well, there are some wise men left, and this friend of mine was one of them. We are inclined to think the life of an actor, an author, or a clerk, to be so *easy*. That's a mistaken notion entirely, and any of the fraternity will disabuse your mind of it immediately. But you are not to seek out the *easy* roads of life; you must seek those which will benefit you and others in the end.

Now, please don't talk any more about trades being only for common folks. It is really too ridiculous.

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolscap Papers.

My New Bank.

I HAVE always been considered one of the most successful financiers in this country. I can make a dollar-bill go further than any other man, as my butcher will testify, or anybody else I ever had dealings with. My tailor has honored me with the remark that I have made that ten dollars I owe him go seven years, with a prospect of going longer.

It is a very easy matter for me to double my money—up.

If every thing had gone right I would now be Secretary of the Treasury, but, through some great oversight, another man was appointed, and, as there could not well be two secretaries, I was honest enough to send in my resignation as an applicant, which was accepted with tears.

Having such confidence in myself in regard to financial affairs, it gives me great satisfaction to remark that I have opened a new bank for the transaction of business, and am ready to do every thing in the brokerage line, as I have been broke so much and long I consider myself capable and efficient.

My bank is located on (stone) Wall, two and three-eighths doors to the right of the left hand as you are going down or coming up, and is fitted up for general business entirely regardless of expense, and every thing is elaborate and complete.

A superb counter, which formerly went under the alias of a dry goods box, finely inlaid with knife-cuts, is one of the chief attractions of the room, and is very well suited for the transaction of business on.

I have one of the finest safes in which to deposit my money that you ever saw. It used to be a cast-iron kitchen stove in its worst days, but I have remodeled it inside, and tied the doors firmly shut with strings, so that it is rendered fireproof—burglar-proof—or at least so far as the burglar is concerned, and look her seat, the hearty rounds of applause which rung out of it. True, there may never have been a cent in it yet, but that makes no difference. It is just the thing to keep your money in, and I'll never regret it.

I am now ready to negotiate for twenty-five cent loans on the shortest notice and most reasonable terms.

The highest price in rags paid for old cash. I will sell gold fifty per cent cheaper than any other bank in town, and throw a shovelful in for good measure.

Particular attention will be given to the shuffling of notes, especially when the sum is so large that it is difficult to take.

Great interest will be taken in all principals, and the principles of this institution are unquestioned.

Gold at my counter will always receive the first premium, although in a short time I shall reduce gold to a copper basis and make the poorest of my fellow-men rich.

I will also do a general exchange business; exchange references, exchange congratulations, at light discount, and buy old iron on short notice and long time.

I shall always be waiting to receive your deposits, and I may add that you will always be waiting to receive them, too.

The increase of specie in this bank during the past week has amounted to fourteen coppers, and the consequence is that the market is a little easier, and on change copper is quoted at 112—below par. Small children feel more confident now, and look for a further decline. I also expect a large increase this week of copper bullion, in the shape of old kettles, mashed-in stove-pans, etc.

This is such a good bank in which to deposit money that people who have none will borrow some for the purpose.

I will engage to turn your money on short notice, but not to return it.

Money will not be tight as long as I have a little loose change in my pocket.

This bank is in complete running order, and, if any runs are made on it, the bank is bound to run, too—the proprietor will run with it.

My draughts are of very good size.

This bank will have grace every day—before me.

The proprietor's notes will not be exchangeable at this counter. I am obliged to adopt this rule on account of great confusion to business, and want of time necessary to attend to that department.

I will always have sums to loan, for I am the loan-some man that ever was.

Statement of Whitehorn's bank for last week:
Gold on hand.....\$500,000,000.01.
Postage stamps, clean.....000,000.03.
Silver on hand.....One ring.
Notes on hand.....000,000.
Currency on hand.....XXXVIII cts.
Ten-Forties.....None.
Pacific R. Bonds.....Do.
County Bonds.....000,000.05.
Poor Tickets.....40,000.25.
Liabilities.....

JOHN SQUINT, Justice of the Peace.

My washerwoman made a run upon the bank yesterday, creating quite a panic and nearly breaking the bank, but it weathered the storm. No washerwoman can wash this bank away.

Five hundred thousand dollars wanted immediately.

This bank will only be closed for repairs when there is sufficient inducements.

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN, Banker.

Woman's World.

A Sorosis Oration.—The Le Vert Matinee.—Grace Greenwood as a Humorist.—Madame Le Vert as a Reader.—The Moral.

Two weeks ago I attended a musical and dramatic evening, given by the Sorosis Club, as a complimentary entertainment to Mme. Octavia Walton Le Vert. The elegant parlors of Mme. de la Marter, on Twentieth street, gave accommodation to the one hundred fair Sorosians and their numerous friends, who came to do honor to the distinguished lady to whom the matinee was given. It was a beautiful scene to witness, but the moral significance of that entertainment had for me more interest by far than its fashionable importance or the intellectual and artistic talent it brought together. What its meaning was to me, dear readers of the WOMAN'S WORLD, I will tell you before I close. Its features, patent to all, I will first describe.

Mrs. Charlotte Wilbour, a tall, handsome,

dark-eyed woman, the president of the club, presided on this occasion; seated with Mme. Le Vert at the upper end of the parlors, behind a rich built table, which served as a reading-desk. She was dressed in a black silk and velvet robe, with a high Elizabethan fraise around her neck, and a black gauze scarf embroidered and fringed with gold. The golden S—the Sorosis badge—was fastened to the left side of her velvet vest, and every member of Sorosis present wore the same badge.

Mme. Le Vert, arrayed in a composite costume of silver gray and turquoise blue, occupied a seat beside Mrs. Wilbour. Her hair was arranged high, in the present style, a la Josephine, and powdered. She wore exquisite old Mechin laces, and suspended around her neck was a miniature portrait of her illustrious grandfather, the Hon. George Walton, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. This picture is a gem of art, and was painted by the elder Peel, Grace Greenwood (Mrs. Lippincott), in plain black silk, and hair arranged in a simple and becoming manner, sat in front of the built table. Mrs. E. F. Ellet; Mrs. Croly (Jenny June); Kate Hillard, the poetess; Ella and Linda Dietz; Mrs. Andrews; Mrs. Thorne; Mrs. Samuel Courtney; Miss Kate Lockwood; Miss Octavia W. Le Vert; Mr. Joseph Booth, the brother of the great tragedian; Mr. Wilbour, and many other celebrities in the world of literature, fashion, society and art were present. It was a brilliant assemblage more than once on these shores.

The entertainment opened with music, a piano solo, and between each recitation or reading a song or piece of instrumental music was introduced. Kate Hillard read her own poem, "The Sparrows," in a charming manner.

Ella Dietz, as a preface to Mme. Le Vert's part of the entertainment, read Mrs. Browning's "Bertha in the Lane;" and then, with a faint flush mounting to her cheek, Mme. Le Vert rose, and unfolding her manuscript, began reading, with a slight tremor in a voice which gained strength as she proceeded, her own interesting account of her "Acquaintance and intimacy with the Brownings" while in Florence, Italy.

It is a charming extract from "Souvenirs of Travel," and it was charmingly read. There was no straining after effect; no effort to give dramatic interest to the narrative, but a simple, clear-toned, unaffected delivery, with that magnetic charm of attraction, that power of fixing and enchainment the attention which is the gift of the natural orator. This charm, which has heretofore been the unconscious secret of Mme. Le Vert's world-wide celebrity as a conversationalist and woman of society, was recognized and felt, appreciated and understood by every ear. When she closed and took her seat, the hearty rounds of applause which rung up from the kid-gloved palms of her fair auditors, spoke as plainly to me as words could say: "This we repudiate the false assertion that 'women do not appreciate women.'"

Grace Greenwood followed Mme. Le Vert, in a recital, in costume, of her humorous sketch, "Tabitha Tattle." She had previously read Mr. Bret Hart's "Tom Flynn," and upon receiving an encore, had rendered his "Cicely" in an admirable manner. In her line of high comedy Grace Greenwood is an artist of rare merit.

And now for the moral significance of this delightful entertainment. To me it conveyed many lessons, but none more striking or more pleasurable than the one that proved that this club was, for the main practical purpose for which it had originated, the encouragement of feminine talent, a completely successful institution. Again, that it has proven that women are capable of organizing and governing whenever they unite for practical results, aiming at good for their own sex. Moreover, by this compliment extended to a talented, accomplished woman, whose whole life has been an *Idyl* of sweet words and kind deeds, this association has proven that women appreciate a true development of the feminine element in woman's character, even more than they do transcendent talents or genius, for Mme. Le Vert, though a woman of talent, an authoress and a journalist, has always been known to the world more as a social genius, a woman of taste and feeling, than as a *litterateur*. It was a tribute to her worth and goodness that elevated this matinee into a glad festival to me, and to many more who were there.

EMILY VERDERY.

QUEER DIVORCE CUSTOMS.

In Australia, among the original natives, divorces are never sanctioned. The Thibetians obtain divorces with the consent of both interested parties. In Morocco, if the wife has no son, she can gain the consent of her tribe for a divorce, and marry again. In Abyssinia no form of marriage is necessary, hence it follows likewise with a divorce. The Siberian men have divorcing all in their own hands, for, if dissatisfied with a wife, they tear her head-dress off, and she has to skedaddle. In Siam the first wife may be divorced, but not *sed*, as may be the other wives. In the Arctic Regions the husband desiring a divorce leaves his home in anger, remains a few days, and, returning, finds his wife has "taken the hint" and cleared out. The Tartars have it all their own way, both husband and wife, for either party can decamp from the other, and the same rule applies to the Hindoos. The Indians of this country burn the tokens of marriage as a sign of divorce, but a chief never divorces a wife who has borne him a son.

C. P. I.

Light-house Lige!

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS,

NOW READY!

In deference to the repeated demand for this new story and being unable to use in the columns of the SATURDAY JOURNAL, except by deferring its publication for a considerable time, we have decided to give it at once, as Number V, of the beautifully-illustrated series of popular novels by popular authors, viz:

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Readers and Contributors.

To CORRESPONDENTS AND AUTHORS.—No MSS. received that are not fully prepaid in postage.—No MSS. preserved for future orders.—Unavailable MSS. promptly returned only where stamps accompany the inclosure, for such return.—No correspondence of any nature is permissible in a package marked as "Book MS."—MSS. which are imperfect are not used or wanted. In all cases, authors must state their names, address, and MSS. unavailable to us are well worth of use.—All experienced and popular writers will find us ever ready to give their offerings early attention.—Correspondents must look to this column for all information in regard to contributions. We can not write letters except in special cases.

We shall have, for various reasons, to say no to the following—those only being returned having stamps inclosed for such return, viz.: "The Combat;" "The Battle of the Alamo;" "At the Stake;" "Edith Allan's Love;" "Follow Me;" "Lost on the Deep;" "The Banished Island;" "The Beech Tree's Story;" "A Man on the Skylight;" "The Unsafe Safe;" "The Atlantic Tragedy;" "A Lumberman's Adventure;" "The Miller's Last Pocket;" "A Fine Follow;" "The Trust Preacher;" "Oh, ye Silent Woods;" "A Wind Harp."

For the following we shall try and find space and place: "The Colt of Keelard;" "The Ruby Ring of Colonsay;" "The Bloodhound;" "Toll On of 'Sunrise and Sunset;" "Give Me the White."

MISS LESSONS. Write to the Secretary of Vassar College for a Catalogue.

J. K. E. Consult Webster's Dictionary.

Geo. Bell. Hawkeye Harry will cost you 35 cents. BANCY B. The Danbury News' funny man is Mr. Jas. M. Bailey.

OLIVE O. Yes; Mark Twain and Mr. Charles Warner are writing a novel together. Better for each to write independently. Partnership in authorship is like a ship running under sail and steam—likely to founder.

SCHRECH OWL. The *Prairie Chief* is published in Cambridge, Ill.; the *Fat Contributor's Saturday Night* in Cincinnati.

TOUR. There is probably no impropriety in writing; but, unless an actual acquaintance exists, you should have the sanction of the lady's parents to the correspondence.

JAS. B. H. The "Omnibus" column is by no means discontinued, but press of other matter has crowded it out.

F. S. G. Practice reading aloud when you are alone. Be very careful to read slowly and pronounce roundly and precisely each syllable of each word. The secret of all good speech is roundness of tone and completeness of syllabification.—A liquor bill can be collected at law as well as any other bill if it is a correct charge.

G. G. M. We know nothing whatever of the firms named. Be sure you send them no money until assured of their responsibility.

MRS. H. B. P. Byron's "Maid of Athens" is yet alive. She is a Mrs. Black. The Countess of Guiccioli, recently deceased, was for many years the friend and confidante of a French Marquis of eminence. Her *liaison* with Byron, instead of doing her social harm, was ever her boast.

EVERARD HOLLY. Baron Leibig, the celebrated chemist, was seventy years of age at the date of his death. He did more to make chemistry popular and practical than any or all other chemists. He scattered broadcast his discoveries in applied chemistry—ironing, which sharp business men have used to their immense profit.

E. B. B. We do not care to see the English life serial. When we want such matter we shall go to English writers for it. Of American authors we expect our own life, character and society to be photographed. American writers make for many years a good poem of subjects, treating of people and situations of which they know but little, and overlooking those things of which they know the most.

The poem, "Follow Me," is rhythmically imperfect. The author must study the laws of rhythm and measure ere he can hope for success in poetic expression. It is wonderful how many persons have true poetic power, yet the number of those who can write a good poem is comparatively small. To write poetry well is a consumable art, as all successful poets will tell you.

The poems, "Lost on the Deep" and "The Enchanted Island," are much too long. "Short and sweet" is the order for the poets. "Linked sweetness long drawn out" may do for book form but not for the popular paper, which demands nothing but the concentrated extract of Hybla's honey.

T. B. G. We do not approve of laying before children a serial which devoted to the story of a Bad Boy; nor, indeed, to a story which the interest is sustained by the elements of badness in it. Children and partly the boys eager for such reading, should be taught what is good rather than given details of what is reprehensible.

E. H. H. Not knowing whether you are a boy or girl, can not advise.

J. C. B. Victoria has nine children. She was born May 24th, 1819; was married to Prince Albert, her cousin, Feb. 10th, 1840; her first child was born Nov. 21st of the same year; her last on April 13th, 1873. She is the mother of many accomplishments, and without doubt, is the proudest person who ever occupied the throne of Great Britain. Her life has been a life of devotedness to duty.

STUART. To write illegibly is a sin against society. You can learn to make your letters distinctly, at least; Legibility must never be sacrificed for any reason. Take time to write.

REGINAL. The present population of Egypt is about 5,000,000. This is supposed to be about one-third of what it was in the Ptolemaic days. Egyptian civilization dates backward into the remotest shadows of history. Scholars are now well assured that vast cities existed along the Nile over 30,000 years ago.

A HOUSEMAID. You can clean tinware by the use of common soda and a wet cloth. Rub briskly and rub dry.

YOUNG DETECTIVE. Your plan may be a good one, but the manner in which murderers are detected in France, is certainly a novel and very good idea. There, a good judge of human nature is placed in a room with a murderer where the body of the murdered man is laid out, to study and note the expression on the face of every one visiting the spot to see the corpse.

SUFFERER. A good mixture for indigestion is to mix well together, and take two or three table-spoonful at noon, viz.: six ounces infusion of columba, one drachm carbonate of potassa, three drachms compound tincture gentian.

MRS. M. L. K. You can clean the black and colored marble mantels in your houses with equal parts of soft soap and pearlash, rubbed on with soft flannel. Then wash with warm water with cold water, and when perfectly dry polish with paraffine oil.

TO A FRIEND WITH A BASKET OF
WILD FLOWERS.

BY MATTIE DYER WHITE.

I send you fresh flowers, my darling,
Fresh flowers all dripping with dew,
In a little green nook by a rippling stream
They blossom in beauty for you.
Bright clusters of fragrant wild roses,
And lilacs with dew-laden bells,
Embraced in a green wreath of mosses
Which grow in the deep forest dells.
I found them this morning and bore them
Away from the home of their birth,
Fair jewels from Nature's own fingers,
Bright gems from the bosom of earth.
I know 'tis a simple token,
For a loved one's love to take,
But God made even the forest flowers,
And we love them for his sake!

Coral and Ruby:
OR,
THE RETRIBUTION OF A LIFE-TIME.BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,
AUTHOR OF "ADRIAN, THE ADOPTED," "STRANGELY WED,"
"CORA'S DECEIT," "HAROLD'S SECRET," "THE PROTE-
GEE," "THE FALSE WIDOW," ETC., ETC.CHAPTER XIII.
CUTTING A WING.

He looked back into the inscrutable face of the woman who could dare address him so. A dark face which had lost the full oval that must have characterized it once, the jaws squarely cut, the mouth firm and thin-lipped, hard black eyes looking boldly out under heavily-arched meeting brows, blue-black satiny hair banded in severest simplicity, which displayed its natural abundance, and the tall figure robed in lustrous black silk, whose sweeping folds gave back no rustle.

"Do not affect indignation, Mr. Tracy. I read your purpose in your face, and have spoken to do you a service. Your chances of winning are very slender as they stand now, with those two infuriated young people only wanting a word to seal the bonds between them. You were acute enough to prevent that word being spoken just now, but it is not probable you will be able to avert the declaration a second time. Once made, the hot-headed, resolute boy and the love-blind girl will neither be readily shaken in their mutual fidelity. It is either to resign your hope or to take such help as may be offered you."

"Suppose I differ with you there, madame? Without egotism every man may stand a chance in a race for love."

"Where the start is equal—granted. In a case like that, certainly not."

She made a slight gesture toward the pair as they passed within a couple of yards' distance, too much absorbed in each other to observe the two whose conference was not calculated to add to their prospects of happiness. Clive's lips compressed and a jealous pang shot home to him.

"Then there seems nothing for it but to bow to the decree of Fate, Mrs. Harland."

"That is a coward's refuge, that piteous whine—Fate willed it so, and you are no coward or I have greatly mistaken. Fate follows in the groove men's acts carve out."

"Then, madame, I shall take heart again. Pardon me for preferring to indulge in no deeper confidence."

"I can readily understand that Mr. Tracy's past experience may incline him to the indulgence of covert sarcasm, but it falls harmless when directed toward me. I have not asked confidence—only offered a kindness which I must beg of you to think twice before refusing."

"And why have you offered it, Mrs. Harland? Our very recent acquaintance does not warrant the supposition that it is exclusively through kindly desires for myself. I am at a loss to divine what object you can have."

"It might be as well to make no attempt at divining it; certainly I am not prepared to give the information. Once more to the point, Mr. Tracy. Is Young Impetuousity to win the prize, or has enough of the passion of eighteen years ago revived in the second edition of the old love to sweep weak scruples out of the way? Will you return the measure which was meted to you with like measure, or will there be another season of exile, a requiem sung over the memory of another lost love, and at last an ascetic recluse with nothing better than musty records to engross him, nothing tenderer in the opinion of his fellow-men than may be conveyed in the acknowledgments of scientific circles for discoveries he has rendered? Is that an alluring prospect? One would imagine that a stately home, with such a sweet mistress as Coral Stuyvesant would make, might seem the pleasant. You should know if any regret will be apt to arise—if the fealty which has endured for eighteen years has been mingled with no bitterness."

He turned a penetrating look upon her, a look which strove to pierce through to the motive that was tempting him. He did not acknowledge to himself that it was a temptation, but he was striving to fathom the inference her words conveyed. What influence or what knowledge had she which could advance his suit? How had she become so conversant with the buried hopes and disappointment of his own past?

"One so familiar with that old-time record as Mrs. Harland shows herself, need scarcely question what course I will pursue. I take back my first impulse, which was to resent—pardon me for putting it plainly—unwarranted intrusion. I am quite willing to avow that if persistent seeking, and a strong, earnest desire to win love through the force of love, if all that I may possess in the way of moral merit, mental acquirement, or secure fortune can avail me—all shall be brought to bear in my purpose to use every honorable means in winning Coral. If they fail, I can do nothing more."

"They will fail. A beardless face and moonlight sentimentality will be more in the balance than your strong purpose and honorable intentions, Mr. Tracy."

"If I thought that," said Clive, moodily, "if I were convinced she loves Dolph—that it is more than a girlish fancy which may be superseded by a depth of feeling not yet aroused, I should never play the marplot to their hopes of happiness."

"You are more generous to Love than Love was kind to you," sneered Mrs. Harland.

"Silly girls' fancies are not apt to be lasting, are they? Do you imagine there is any lingering of 'long syne' in Mrs. Stuyvesant's remembrance? If like mother like daughter, Coral will not be hard to console."

A dark flush swept over Tracy's face, and an ominous flash was in his eyes.

"Be kind enough to drop allusions, madame. How you have made yourself so well acquainted with my affairs I neither know nor care; there are few of us who escape some such experience with no particular harm done. To oblige, you will not refer to the part which the lady who is now Mrs. Stuyvesant had in the matter; it was my misfortune to love without avail, but she was beyond reproach."

"Like Caesar's wife," answered Mrs. Harland, a metallic ring just recognizable in the subdued tone she had used throughout the conversation.

"We all have such experiences—perhaps—but I do not imagine that we would all willingly repeat them. I have offered you a chance to escape that, and you have not accepted it. Very well, Mr. Tracy."

Again that penetrating glance, baffled in the attempt to search the depths of her meaning. "I confess to being puzzled, madame. In what way can you aid me to a consummation which my own suit may not command? Pardon me for saying that the idea hints strongly of absurdity or—foul play."

The thin lips wavered in a smile which was bitter, taunting, triumphant, all in one.

"And Mr. Tracy will not stoop to be swayed by either. So be it then. There are doubtless others in the field who may prove themselves less scrupulous. Of one thing rest assured, those two young fools have arrived at the end of their tether. They will never be more than you see them there, silly and fond, almost satisfied that they have struck the path of rose-leaves and are to sip dew and honey in mutual satisfaction. Almost—but it is to stop there, and you are too conscientious to improve the opportunity. One would not be apt to imagine that you had preserved the guileless simplicity which would prompt to such self-sacrifice, Mr. Tracy."

He was uneasy under her glance. If she possessed such power as she claimed it was scarcely an influence for good, and why not invest himself with it rather than leave her to seek another more unscrupulous.

"Present considerations out of the question, why should it stop there, Mrs. Harland? Why not end as pleasant romances do? What, except their own wills, is to prevent?"

"Questions readily answered—if obscurely. It is to be so because I have said it. It is to be because I hold a grudge against those Stuyvesants which shall be visited over the head of that languishing, lily-faced girl yonder, further and deeper than you can yet see. I have no great animosity against her; she is welcome to her blooming Paradise if she can rear it up after I have done with her. That is why I have spoken to you. You, who love her, or profess to do so, should not pick flaws in the chance of sparing her a worse choice. Do you see that smirking little lawyer following in her wake? Would he hesitate, think you, to ally himself with the name, and fame, and fortune of Richmond's belle, little Coral Stuyvesant yonder? He shall certainly have the opportunity which you refuse."

"If I refuse," Mr. Tracy spoke meditatively. "You put the case in a more alluring light, madame. To save Coral unhappiness, which would I not do? But, you do not tell me how this positive effect is to be produced. Our lion-hearted Dolph will not be blown out in the chance of sparing her a worse choice. Do you see that smirking little lawyer following in her wake? Would he hesitate, think you, to ally himself with the name, and fame, and fortune of Richmond's belle, little Coral Stuyvesant yonder? He shall certainly have the opportunity which you refuse."

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"The grime smile wavered over the thin-lipped mouth. "Evasive concessions, but I am not blind to your praiseworthy object. I can trust to your own sincerity to overrule your present half-formed intention of learning the secret of my power to frustrate my plans. You will think better of it, I am sure, with the prize at hand."

"But Dolph!"

"The Stuarts have some of the oldest, proudest, prejudice-tainted blood of Virginia aristocracy running in their veins. A son of that house will scarcely seek a bride whose escutcheon is less than fair."

"And whose fairer than the Stuyvesants? There can be no question of equality. Strongly prejudiced as Mr. Stuart may be, he will gladly welcome Coral as his son's bride."

"You mean he would gladly welcome the representative of a proud, untarnished name, the supposed heiress of the Stuyvesant fortune. How if she came disgraced, nameless, penniless?"

"The supposition is absurd, and this aimless conference grows wearisome."

"Not so absurd as you think." Her low, impressive tone carried conviction against his will. "There is a weight of shame, of pitiful weakness, which has overhung her from the very day of her birth; a threatening danger which she does not suspect. I give you the chance to avert it from her through offering a surer refuge of love than could be given by that infuriated boy. You distrust me yet, but you shall soon know what leniency I accord her. It is a pity you do not incline to be reconciled to Mr. Tracy. You could scarcely fail in finding full satisfaction through knowledge of the terror which has haunted Helene Stuyvesant—your one-time fickle love—for more than seventeen years."

And with her hard black eyes fixed unwaveringly upon him, she brought her lips closer to utter the startling assertion, which was the secret of the power she had exercised most cruelly.

Off in the further end of the great dining-hall the tables had been cleared away. Double arched, supported by slender flower-wreathed columns, separated the space from the vista, where the feasting and bustling, flirting, suggestive side-scenes and open love-making, still went on. A pianist, shut somewhere away from sight, was playing a delightful dance measure, and a few couples seemed to float, light as thistle-downs, over the distant floor.

Clive Tracy saw and heard, but with an obstructed sense, as if sight and sound were at an immense distance and vaguely apparent to him. The jingle of glasses and the merriment of a gay party near sounded like some painfully hollow echo, and the lights danced up and down in a wavering line. The dizzy reel of his brain was over in a second. The shock which struck through him and the giddy faintness had passed without a trace of visible evidence, and a surge of deep, pitying tenderness succeeded. Strange to say, he did not once doubt the wildly-improbable tale the woman's words conveyed—a life volume of tragic history concentrated in a couple of pointed sentences. Looking straight before him, with the muscles of his face suddenly relaxed, the awe of intense pity upon him, his first thought took form upon his lips.

"Great God, what a burden! Poor, poor Helene!"

Mrs. Harland's calm face reflected no show of emotion.

"You see what I might do were I so disposed," she said, quietly. "Exposure and disgrace, which would bow their proud heads and break their stubborn hearts, and I visit neither upon them. I have put the knowledge into your hands to use or refuse without exacting a promise from you." It was true, and seemed to speak favorably for her good faith in dealing with him, yet Mrs. Harland had in no way committed herself or her own deep, bitter interests at stake in that low-voiced communication.

"Yet you have told me for no good purpose, I feel assured of that. Through no prompting of kindly feeling for me, through no mercy for poor Helene or little Coral. Why have you made me your confidant I will not waste words in asking, but, if you have thought to make me an instrument to torture that proud, suffering heart, and to draw humiliation down upon the

head of my rival of old, you have utterly mistaken your mark. You have some cause for enmity against them, you say. Is it generous to enter their household, to eat their bread, to creep into their confidence, and still betray them?"

Mrs. Harland laughed softly.

"I am not an Iscariot, selling my master for thirty pieces of silver, Mr. Tracy. I am not a snake in the grass, to strike its fangs unawares, or a coward, to deal a death-blow in the dark. It is not the bread of dependence I am eating, or of friendship, so I betray no trust. I can afford an open battle, with the odds in my favor."

His glance, fixed upon her face, changed threatening and stern.

"Let me give you a word of quiet warning, Mrs. Harland. I tell you frankly that I do not trust you; I do not believe your intention is to deal fairly by them or me. It may be that your past is not quite cloudless or free of skeleton remembrances, and, so surely as you betray the knowledge which gives you a mastery, the dark side of your life, which your face does not quite conceal, shall be dragged forward to the light."

She listened with a half-smile, but, without answering a word, slightly inclined her head and walked away.

Your frank distrust does infinite credit to your penetration, Mr. Tracy," she reflected. "That very distrust will work into my hands better than your blind compliance would do. Man's overweening egotism—your commendable longing to spare grief to that fair young beauty, who will pine her heart out for her first and only love, just as the mother's existence has been one of life-long regret and bitter remorse, will sweeten the revenge which is but just retribution for years and years to come. And then, when they breathe freely in the belief that Coral has escaped—such an escape!—the blow which has been suspended so long shall be hurled upon them."

Coral was among the waltzers, a bright vision, the pink silk like a glistening rose cloud, the flowing bronze hair and sweet, shy face very close to Dolph's shoulder, his eyes, filled with rapturous, tender light, scarcely leaving her—a very evident case to the spectators, who already linked the names of the two.

"Quite time I had my eyes upon them," mused Mrs. Harland. "Five minutes alone after that, and I would not answer for the obstinate resistance those two young fools might make."

"I refuse," Mr. Tracy spoke meditatively. "You put the case in a more alluring light, madame. To save Coral unhappiness, which would I not do? But, you do not tell me how this positive effect is to be produced. Our lion-hearted Dolph will not be blown out in the chance of sparing her a worse choice. Do you see that smirking little lawyer following in her wake? Would he hesitate, think you, to ally himself with the name, and fame, and fortune of Richmond's belle, little Coral Stuyvesant yonder? He shall certainly have the opportunity which you refuse."

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"Such a turn of address is execrable, sir," she answered, haughtily, "as your companion-ship is undesirable. Will you pass on, or shall I vacate in your favor?"

"Miss Harland, I will neither pass on nor shall you go just yet." Mr. Wing planted himself directly in her path, dropping his hand upon her wrist. A flush had risen to the lawyer's hollow cheeks, his lids drooping over those restless light eyes left their yellow gleams distinct; his smooth, suave address dropped in a determination to make himself heard. "You avoid me; you scorn me; you treat me like a dog; but you shall hear and answer now. I will not take a refusal while there is a chance of your revoking it. I will forgive your slights and your contemptuous treatment of me; I will forget them in my consuming love for you, if you will give me the slightest hope, the smallest encouragement."

There was no mistaking the anger and scorn which made one attempt to draw away, but desisted as his clasp tightened with vise-like pressure.

"You will forgive me, Mr. Wing? What unparalleled magnanimity! And I treat you like a dog? It is a deplorable failing, I am well aware, but I have an unhappy proclivity for acting in accordance with my sentiments. Release me, sir. If you ever dare repeat this unwarrantable annoyance, I shall be forced to appeal to my guardian to protect me from the insolence of your presumption."

There was no mistaking the anger and scorn which made one attempt to draw away, but desisted as his clasp tightened with vise-like pressure.

"You will forgive me, Mr. Wing? What unparalleled magnanimity! And I treat you like a dog? It is a deplorable failing, I am well aware, but I have an unhappy proclivity for acting in accordance with my sentiments. Release me, sir. If you ever dare repeat this unwarrantable annoyance, I shall be forced to appeal to my guardian to protect me from the insolence of your presumption."

There was no mistaking the anger and scorn which made one attempt to draw away, but desisted as his clasp tightened with vise-like pressure.

"You will forgive me, Mr. Wing? What unparalleled magnanimity! And I treat you like a dog? It is a deplorable failing, I am well aware, but I have an unhappy proclivity for acting in accordance with my sentiments. Release me, sir. If you ever dare repeat this unwarrantable annoyance, I shall be forced to appeal to my guardian to protect me from the insolence of your presumption."

The lawyer glared after her, his face blanched to an ashy hue from intensity of rage.

"Your day now, my queenly Ruby. But every dog has his day, and mine will come."

Then Mr. Wing's teeth set in a fierce grit at her open contempt of him.

CHAPTER XIV.
POOR YOUNG HEARTS.

MR. TRACY wished for a few minutes' private interview with Mrs. Stuyvesant; would she oblige him? Miss Lang carried the message, and delivered it in her own unobtrusive way, subdued and stealthily quiet as though no flame of curiosity was ablaze within her. Miss Lang had some way ferreted out the fact that the two had been lovers once; that, having been, it was scarcely the proper thing, she argued, for the gentleman to intrude at a time when Mrs. Stuyvesant was sure to be alone, at liberty to grant the interview he asked without fear of interruption.

"To see me?" The lawyer's pale wife looked up in surprise. It was early for a call, and the young ladies were out, accompanied by Mrs. Harland, on a shopping excursion, which would occupy the whole morning. "You can show him in here, Miss Lang."

Helene, with the thin, wistful face turned to the light, wondered a little what he could possibly want of her. Miss Lang gave a shrewd guess at the truth, as she made a furtive scrutiny of the visitor, noting the abstracted look and his half-start, as if waking from a deep meditation as she glided up to address him.

"He's either in love or in trouble," thought Miss Lang, "and it's most probably the first. I shouldn't be surprised if he's come to make her a confidant, or to propose out and out for one of the young ladies. Which, I wonder?"

She closed the door after admitting him, lingering close to the keyhole for half a minute, during which no sound came from within; then, as a footstep somewhere near became audible, she swept the soft folds of her gray merino close about her, and with a noiseless dash, entered another door, passing in before the intruder, whoever it was, had perceived her. The footstep died away in the distance, but Miss Lang did not return—for the satisfactory reason that she had taken up a better post of observation in Mrs. Stuyvesant's dressing-room, where she was secure from sudden interruption.

Mr. Tracy paused just within the door. It was a little boudoir, rose-tinted, silken-draped, a single painting like a stretch of rare mellow

scenery on the wall. The curtains, half-drawn before an arched window recess, let in a flood of rosy light. But the slight form in the deep cushioned chair, with small hands loosely clasped in her lap, and delicate profile, defined against the ruddy glow, looked more than ever fragile in that bright atmosphere amid the dainty appointments of the room.

"A rude shock would surely kill her," Clive thought. "And yet she has lived for seventeen years knowing that, and her indomitable pride has never yielded. Poor Helene!"

And Helene, feeling his presence, turned the thin white face with a smile of welcome.

"You gave me a surprise, standing there, although I was expecting you," she said. "I did not hear you enter, Mr. Tracy. It is easy to see you have not passed your life in a 'little more folding of the hands in sleep.' No doubt you have put in a half-day profitably when I began to wonder what I should do with the morning."

"And that reminds me that I am unfashionably early; but you'll pardon me, will you not? So long among solitudes and savages, I'm half a savage myself, I suppose. Are you quite well Mrs. Stuyvesant? I feared not when you failed to appear at the concert, and again last night."

"I have given up the gayeties for a time, you know. Charged my responsibility in other keeping while I take a respite."

"Was it wisely done, do you think, Helene? Don't think me intrusive, please; I have your household interests too nearly at heart to let this matter pass. The lady who has taken the charge—this Mrs. Harland—I distrust from my very heart. She is an enemy of yours, and it is not well to have such under the shelter of one's own roof."

The thin hands locked nervously, and she gave him one startled glance.

"An enemy, Mr. Tracy? It is something notable to have an enemy nowadays. I scarcely aimed at so great importance."

He was silent for a moment, then resumed: "The object of my coming was to tell you something different from that, something pleasant, I hope. I have come to ask Coral at your hands, Helene. With a happy home and Coral for my wife, I shall not regret a long stretch of lonely years. Will you give me God-speed, Helene?"

"Coral?—you want to marry Coral, Clive? And I never suspected it. You will be disappointed—how I hope you have not set your heart strongly upon this. Have you not seen what is evident to even me—they say mother-love is never so blind as in acknowledging a child's heart turned to another. Have you not seen that Dolph and Coral are all in all to each other?"

"There is no engagement?" questioned Clive, alarmed lest the evil he feared might be drawn down despite his efforts to avert it.

"None—as yet. Do not build upon a false hope, Clive. They love each other, and Dolph is only waiting an opportunity to speak—he has told me so—and I was glad to sanction his suit with my approval. It must seem strange to you that I should be so willing to part with my daughter, young as she is, and knowing as little of the world's ways yet, but there is a reason—a reason why I should wish to see her the wife of a man true, faithful and tender, whose love shall be a shield to her and a protection. I can trust her to Dolph without one fear."

She spoke in a hurried, constrained way, the wistful dark eyes soft with the pity she had once not expressed. It was hard that he who had once been so grievously disappointed through her should be disappointed again through her daughter.

"With Dolph out of the question, Helene—if it were shown you that those two could never marry, could you trust Coral as willingly to me?"

"There is not one I would sooner trust, not Dolph himself, if she loved you."

"Thank you, Helene. There is a reason, your reason, why I should urge my suit. To spare Coral misery, to spare you worse. I would spare you this if I could, but you must know the danger, and I have been told your secret. Don't look at me so, Helene. You must know me better than to suppose I will make any ungenerous use of the knowledge."

Ghastly white, the set features locked in an expression of great dread, a look like the mortal terror of some dumb animal in the big soft eyes, she neither stirred nor spoke.

"That woman would betray all sooner than Coral should marry Dolph," Tracy went on. "There must be some touch of tenderness in her hard nature, since she is willing to spare Coral the worst, and to give her a chance of happiness yet—but not through Dolph. I listened to prevent her seeking a more unscrupulous agent as she threatened to do. I know all, and I have come to plead for Coral's hand in the belief that she will be happy with me. She could scarcely be that were Dolph ever so true, when once Mrs. Harland's threat is carried into execution. The family pride of the Stuarts is bitter, prejudiced, and resentful, and aroused, it would be turned in endless persecutions against them both. Forgive this apparent cruelty, Helene; I am compelled to speak plainly. You can imagine what humiliation might be put upon this innocent child if she claimed to be irretrievably bound to Dolph. Give Coral to me, and let me buy off that woman from her persecution of you. She is your bitter enemy, and you are not safe while she is near you. Every man has his price, and Mrs. Harland has hers without a doubt."

"You know!" the white lips parted to pant. "Oh, merciful heavens, you know! Then she has betrayed us at last!"

"Not irretrievably betrayed, Helene. Your secret is safe with me as with yourself. I can understand that it is your pride which has upheld you, and borne you bravely in the face of it all these years, the same pride that led you once to choose the dazzling lot rather than the humbler which—pardon me for saying it—might have been the happier. I fear you have found it a lot of gilded misery, and my life has been woefully incomplete until now that it is filled with a hope of recompense for that old disappointment. The sweet ideal love of a life which no other woman has touched is realized in her. I plead as much for Coral's sake as for my own."

The man's face, turned toward her with its hungry yearning, its unspoken tenderness and great pity, told more than his words. Seeing him so, Helene knew that it was more the passion of long ago nurtured through all this time which swayed him, than a new growth over the ashes of a dead love. But Coral would be safe with him if there were safety anywhere. A pang of remorse as she thought of Dolph—Dolph who had called her "little mother," and who was well worthy of her child, but better let those two foolish young hearts ache a little than to estrange Dolph from his family, or to call the bitterness of the Stuart pride in reproach and vituperation upon Coral's innocent head.

"Mrs. Harland has declared that she shall never marry Dolph," Tracy repeated. "I think she would go with the story to the elder Stuart first, and that must not be, Helene."

"Why not as well first as last?" she asked, wearily. "She will never be satisfied until she has brought the disgrace upon us. She is bitter and relentless as death."

"That is because she is so sure of her power over you. Give me a right to fight your battle; as Coral's husband let me make the cause of her parents mine. Helene, is this hollow mockery of life better than—than—" He hesitated.

The pallid face upturned and the small hands wrung themselves together.

"I know what you mean, but I would die. How could I live with my name made a reproach, a subject for sneering contempt or worse—pity? You mean kindly, but for me there can be no change except death. For Coral—"

She broke off, and held up her hand warningly. It was Coral's own voice she heard, singing a snatch from a popular opera as she came up the stairs and passed the door. The party had returned.

"I will go down to the library and wait, if you will send her to me there, Helene. I'll tell her my object if you think best, and—will you not aid me by your desire?"

"So soon, Clive?"

"It will be better before Dolph speaks."

He went at that.

Coral answered the summons which called her to her mother's presence, after a little delay. Her fair face wore a cloud which was not in accordance with the happy heart that had overflowed in song a few minutes before.

"Well, mamma; here I am, awaiting orders."

It was a hard task before Mrs. Stuyvesant, and she began it hurriedly, lest heart and courage might fail her yet.

"Coral, Mr. Tracy is in the library, waiting for an interview with you. He—he is going to ask you to be his wife, my daughter."

"Mamma!" in dismay.

"It is not so very hard to discover that one is loved, is it?"

"But I don't love him, mamma, and it is hard to be obliged to tell that. Why couldn't he go to papa? Men don't, and so much trouble in saying No, I imagine."

"That must not be your answer, Coral. You must not refuse Mr. Tracy. Not if you have any love for your father or for me; if you would know happiness or peace in the future."

"Mamma!" Wonder, amazement and indignation in that ejaculation.

"It means all that. To refuse him means disgrace to us all, ruin to your father, death to me. I am not speaking idly; I am too hopelessly in earnest to be any thing but fearfully conscious of the dire consequences involved."

"Then it was true, all that Ruby's mother has been telling me! I would not believe it before."

"What, Coral?" That startled look again, and the heart clogged in its beating. The incidents of the morning were telling upon Mrs. Stuyvesant's overstrained nerves.

"I am almost ashamed to repeat it, and still I am forced to believe. Mrs. Harland predicted this to me not ten minutes ago. She followed me into my dressing-room, where I was removing my slippers. She said that, while we were looking at jewelry in McAllister's, she had come across an amulet which seemed so singularly appropriate to me, she had purchased it while Ruby and I had our attention otherwise engaged, and hoped I would not refuse to accept it. Here it is, mamma."

She drew a tiny case from her pocket and opened it to exhibit a rather singular piece of jewelry. An ornament carved from delicate pink coral—two hands clasping a heart as if each were striving to wrest it from the other.

"She laughed, and asked me if I read any warning in it. I answered that, if the heart were mine, the hands surely were also, and that I must be meaning to keep tight guard over it."

"You are so unsuspicious, such an innocent child, I can believe you have escaped a presence of the two hands—not yours—already stretched out to clutch that precious little heart," she replied. That spoken carelessly, but with those hard black eyes seeming to read me through. I am tempted to lift the curtain which obscures your view, Coral."

"She told me then that both Mr. Tracy and Mr. Stuart were evidently aspirants for my hand, and that you would undoubtedly favor the former. She went on to say he was an old lover of yours, and mamma—Coral's cheeks were aflame and her voice rung with indignation—that your marriage de convenance had never sufficed to overcome your preference for him; that it was sure to prompt your urging my acceptance of him. What more she meant to divulge I can not say, for there I interrupted her, angry that such a liberty should be taken by such a stranger, with a refutation of the facts she assumed, and just then your summons came."

"You doubted me, Coral?"

"You have never seemed happy, mamma. There have been no mutual ties such as other households know; I have seemed all in common between you and papa. Why should it be so? Why should you urge me now to a marriage which can never be any thing but distasteful to me?"

"My child, will you not trust me in believing that it is for your happiness? You have felt the blight of the misery which has made wreck of our lives—your father's and mine. Pray Heaven you may never realize more of it. Coral, I appeal to you, not for my sake, but for your own and his. It is ruin to us all if you refuse—worse than ruin to your father. To him it means terrible retribution for a crime."

"Mamma, how strangely you talk. A crime! Papa is no criminal; he could commit no dishonorable act; I will never believe that."

"It is the truth—the bitter, bitter truth. Think for yourself; would life be such a mockery as you have felt it has been for us without some deep and dark reason? Unloving wives and husbands there have been before now, but do they break down in the prime of life, bear the marks of the haunting fear which is ever present with us? It is for you to avert it if you will, Coral."

"But, mamma, I can not understand. What is it that my father is threatened with—that that he has ever done can reflect upon us all? What is this awful secret you hint at?"

"You may not know that, Coral. It is all I have told you—as ruinous, as disgraceful, and we have an enemy who holds the knowledge ready to betray us."

"And that is Mrs. Harland. I have known from the first that she had some hold upon papa. Is it so very dreadful as you say, mamma? Is there no way of evading her or persuading her to leave him in peace?"

"Only one way. You know what that is."

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give you up willingly if another could bring you safety and happiness. Dolph, brave and true as he is, could never bring these to you; the secret once made known could not fail to estrange him from his family if he clung to you, and our ruin would be inevitable. My life is but a small consideration in the balance, Coral, but your father's good name and your happiness—can you deliberately wreck those?"

"Oh, mamma! must it be—is it right that it should be so? To spare pain to you and papa I would do much; but my happiness—can I ever be happy, does any one ever find happiness, wedded and unloving? Mamma, can you advise me to that?"

"A glow like an inspiration swept over Mrs. Stuyvesant's features. The pallor, the woeful anxiety and entreaty were lost in it, and the thin, worn face seemed to have caught something of the first sweetness of youth.

"You can not fail to learn love with one tender and true as Olive Tracy will be. Mrs. Harland told you that mine had been a *marriage de convenance*, and she spoke the truth; but of all the bitterness of misery and desolation which has come to me since, the worst has been that I never dared breathe the love which grew up in my heart, which your innocent baby eyes first revealed to me when I found myself tracing your features and loving you more for your resemblance to your father. For one little hour I was happy in the revelation which came to me of my love for him, and I was on my way to gladden him with the long-delayed confession, when—oh, heaven! shall I never forget the agony of that moment?—when I heard that which froze the words upon my lips and made it impossible they should ever be uttered."

Her face dropped into her hands, and the slight, relaxed frame was convulsed though she uttered neither sob nor moan. Coral was awed and shaken by such deep, wordless emotion. She went down upon her knees by her mother's side, tears wetting her cheeks, kissing the thin, wax-like hands as she drew them away.

"My poor mamma! and I have always been unjust to you. Tell me one thing: will my marriage with Mr. Tracy bring happiness to papa and you?"

"The truest happiness we can ever know. I will not deceive you, Coral; such happiness as you mean we never can know. There is a gulf between us which can never be bridged over. Through his fear for you that woman finds her best means of torturing him; with your future assured, the worst she can do will fall lightly for that knowledge. You must go now, my child. Olive is waiting for his answer from your own lips."

Coral shrank as if she had been struck a blow, but rose up without a word.

Clive, awaiting her, started up and came forward as she entered the library. It gave him a shock to see how marble-like the delicate pure face had grown, an unmoved pallor settled there, the resemblance he had loved to trace to Helene as she had been in her youth, lost in the stronger resemblance brought out for the first to Helene as she had been since the great dread of her life had fallen upon her.

"Coral, your face tells me that you know what I am waiting to learn. What shall my answer be—will you marry me, darling?"

"If you still wish it, knowing that I do not love you. Will you tell me, Mr. Tracy, what is this dreadful secret, this danger threatening poor papa, which can only be averted by a marriage with you?"

"It is to spare you that knowledge more even than my tender love which has led me to seek you, Coral. You shall not regret the trust you have shown by this consent if my life's devotion to you and yours can suffice to repay it."

Could it? Not one answering thrill in the heart which seemed to have turned to ice within her breast.

That same evening she was alone in the drawing-rooms just before they were lighted up. She was standing within the curtained space of the bay window, looking out upon the gray winter dusk through which the street lamps were blinking their red eyes as one after another shot out its awakened gleam. She had accepted her sacrifice, and she would make no moan over it, but the burden was grievously heavy yet. Perhaps in time she might learn the peace which the consciousness of duty well done is said to bring; she might even learn happiness in a negative way as Clive Tracy's wife. It seemed a very weary way just now, but she was resolute in crushing down the thought of that.

Of a sudden she caught her breath hard, pressed her hand over her wildly-beating heart, and leaned forward striving to pierce with her gaze the line of tree-shadows just across the way. Some one had halted there and seemed to be intently regarding the house. She could only trace the form; but she knew that it was Dolph, such is the subtle, unfailing intuition of love.

Just then the lights in the room at her back sprang up for one second, throwing the ghastly figure into bold relief. She stepped back and dropped the curtains, feeling that with the act she had shut the light out from her own life.

She was all alone, and high courage, brave heart failed her there. Not a sigh or sob or sound, but she dropped into a seat, her face buried in her hands and shaded by the aureole of floating hair.

"Coral!"

"She had heard no one and she started with a half-exclamation. Dolph was beside her, pale, haggard-eyed, despairing as she had never seen him before. It needed no words to tell her that he already knew, and her own face was blanched and still as if carved from Carrara stone. The two tortured young hearts, throbbing and bleeding from the fresh wound, steeled themselves in their strength of pride. Poor young hearts! it was a trail casing for the fierce flame raging there. Silence for a second, and then Dolph's falling gaze caught the sparkle of Tracy's ring upon her hand.

"I have not been dreaming then. It seemed so like a horrible nightmare that I have been expecting to wake, I believe. Your happy fiancé was considerate enough to break the news to me, Miss Stuyvesant, and I have hastened to congratulate you upon the success of arts which should put the deepest adventures to shame. I would have affirmed that there were no wiles under your smiles, no traps hidden by your graces. It must appear the extreme of guileless candor to have believed, but I shall probably never be guilty of that same boyish weakness again. Oh, Coral, Coral! I hoped so much from you."

"The boy's pride broke; the pain and the disappointment were choking him; the beardless mouth was tremulous with the agitation which grew overmastering at thought of all he had lost. Coral could not endure that; better he should think her cruel, artful, false, than to betray an expression of her anguish.

"You have come to congratulate me? I am sure you will think me wise in choosing one so true in nature, so noble in heart and mind as your friend. I wish you happiness in anticipation, Dolph, for the time when your choice shall be made."

She scarcely knew what words she was uttering in her fear and desire to divert him from the contemplation.

"The wish is premature, Miss Stuyvesant."

With faith lost in womankind, I shall not care to repeat my experience soon, even if assured of a happier result. No other woman can ever be to me what you have been, and no other could ever wound me so. With friendship and love both proved false in one hour, I can't consistently wish you much happiness, and no doubt you will be just as greatly blest without."

With that he had flung himself out again; and Coral, miserably low-spirited and weak at heart, stole away to her room before unfriendly eyes should spy out the bitter pain which would not be pressed from sight just at the first.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 162.)

Barbara's Fate:

OR,

A BRIDE, BUT NOT A WIFE.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "LOVE BLIND," "OATH BOUND," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AT THE DEAD VAULT.

"Rex, dear, I find it necessary to go to New York to-day. You can spare me?"

Young Mrs. Chetwynd looked down in her husband's eyes as she came up beside him while he sat reading the morning paper.

"Spare you? We never can spare you, darling; so good a daughter and so fond a wife is indispensable to us. But I guess I can let you go."

He reached his hand to caress hers, that lay lightly on his shoulder, and smiled at her.

"And you will be so kind and attentive to Mrs. Chetwynd, dear? She needs constant sympathy, you know, Rex; and, above all, don't let her and Roy look over her griefs. It will be more than she can stand."

"So kind, so womanly, my own sweet wife," was the husband's tender, complimentary reply.

"Then let me kiss you good-by till luncheon—I will be back by then."

And, with tenderest caresses and kisses, Barbara started on the errand that, had he known its import, and more particularly all connected with it, would have frozen those kisses into curses on his lips.

Barbara made a plain, elegant traveling toilet, and reached the city in ample time for the train that took her to New York.

Arrived at the Chambers street ferry, she procured a cab, and was driven to the dull, dingy shop of an undertaker on Second avenue, to whom she communicated her errand, and made all the arrangements she had intended.

A few purchases of muslins and flannels, a light lunch at Currier's, and then to the depot again in time to catch the train home by luncheon.

Her package she carried to her own room at once, and then changed her black velvet walking-suit for an afternoon home dress—a trailing silk of richest black.

The family were gathered in the dining-room around the table, on which a light lunch of oyster patties, cold boned turkey and dry, buttered toast was spread; with coffee for the ladies, and Port for the gentlemen.

It was partaken of almost in silence, and added to the gloom of their somber black garments, was the moaning of the March winds outside, and the cold, cheerless gray sky that was slowly covering up the last traces of the blue.

As usual, after luncheon, while Mr. Chetwynd, Rex and Roy remained for their cigars, Mrs. Chetwynd and Barbara retired to the family sitting-room—a large, well-lighted, elegantly furnished apartment, opposite the parlor, at the front of the house.

It was a remarkably homelike look, even on that cloudy, cheerless March afternoon.

A bright sea-coal fire was snapping and crackling in the grate, its ruddy glow reflected on the gilt lances of grapes that ornamented the wall paper; several low, cozy chairs were drawn up by the velvet draped, near the grate; footstools stood before higher chairs, and a crimson brocade lounge was wheeled up to the ebony center-table, whereon lay books, magazines and the popular weeklies.

And still, delightfully pleasant as this room appeared, with all these appliances of luxury and taste, its long, bright crimson damask curtains, looped away by gold bands, its costly landscape paintings, in their massive frames, its dainty necklaces and tall necked Sevres vases, it reminded them more of the dead than any other room in the mansion, excepting Blanche's own sleeping apartment.

On one table lay a splendidly embroidered mat, of gold and crystal beads on crimson velvet, that Blanche had made for the stereoscope to rest upon.

On the marble mantel was a magnificent drape of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold braid and edged with a wide, heavy gold fringe; there were ottomans, worked in Affghan stitch, and a gorgeous-hued blanket of the same style, thrown over the back of the sofa, that Blanche had made for the sofa.

When she lay down, and a pillow to match.

Little wonder was it, then, that Mrs. Chetwynd's heart bled afresh whenever she entered this room and saw over and over again the mute reminders of her daughter's love and thoughtfulness.

As she entered this apartment, leaning on Barbara's strong, firm arm, all her loss came vividly upon her, and her tears fell thick and fast.

"If I could only look at her again, Barbara; if I could just kiss her once more, and touch those dear, thin hands!"

"It could do you no good," answered Barbara, softly, bending down to caress the cold fingers she held. "It always seems to me a sacrilege to disturb the dead after they are once laid away."

"But it wouldn't hurt her, Barbara! I'd be so careful not to hurt her—my own, own Blanche!"

"Of course you'd not hurt her; I did not mean that, for we both know our dear Blanche is beyond all suffering forever; but I do most certainly think, dear Mrs. Chetwynd, that in your state of mind, and consequent physical weakness, you could do nothing more prudent. As I said at first, it can do you no possible good, and I am confident the satisfaction of once more looking on her unconscious face would not repay for the consequent harrowing of your feelings anew."

Mrs. Chetwynd's tears were falling like glistening crystals on her heavily creped dress, and Barbara, with her contemptuous, pitiless smile as she stood over her, was smoothing back the faintly streaked hair—streaked with pale silver since Blanche had died; and her fingers were cool and mesmeric in their touch, so that Mrs. Chetwynd, even amid all the grief that was consuming her, realized what a comfort her adopted daughter was.

Later, the gentlemen, their wine and cigars finished, rejoined them, and a general conversation ensued, while Barbara, after an hour, excused herself, and retired to her own room.

There was a sufficiency of work for her to do, and, securing her doors from possible intruders, she sat down, with a calmly-triumphant face, and nimbly deft fingers, to her task.

With creditable skill she stuffed a dummy, that would about answer to Blanche's size. This she dressed in Blanche's satin grave-clothes, and around the head she pinned a damask napkin.

This done, she wrapped a waterproof around it, and laid it on a shelf of her wardrobe; she carefully collected all shreds and litter from the carpet, and burned them.

By this time it was half-past five—a half-hour of the dinner-time at Chetwynd Chase; and intensely dark.

She rung for Regina to light the lamps, and then, with all the graceful precision that characterized her movements, began some slight alterations in her toilet.

She moved the plain linen collar, and substituted one of filmy lace; for the jet jewelry she wore heavy Etruscan gold, and wound a string of gold beads in her hair.

She had decided from the first, and communicated her will to all the family, that she would not put on strict mourning for Blanche. She would wear black dresses and mantles, but wished to reserve the right of her usual ornaments. She was satisfied that all were convinced how deeply she lamented dear Blanche's loss, and would permit her to consult her own wishes in this respect.

And they accorded her a meed of praise for her sense.

And Barbara, radiant in her elegant mourning dresses, laughed at her beautiful reduction, and thought how admirably black became her.

To-night she was peerlessly fair, and Regina's eyes lighted up with a half-jealous admiration as she watched her mistress clasp the wide golden bracelets and adjust the sparkling ruby ring—it had been a wedding gift for Blanche.

"While we are at dinner, Regina, you may take this bundle to Mrs. Davenall—she will at once know their use. Then, while the servants are at their table, you may carry this," and she opened the wardrobe door and showed the lay figure. "You know where to place it, Regina, and be sure you give me the key when you come back."

At dinner that night, Barbara was unusually pensive and quiet. Once or twice she raised her hand to her forehead, and pressed it there, as if to ease some distress.

Her husband was not slow to note all this, and anxiously inquired if she was ill.

No, she was not ill, but she believed she had a headache. If she could be excused, she would retire to her room after dessert, and lay down.

Rex attended her to her room, and insisted upon bathing her temples with the fragrant, aromatic toilet-vinegar, until she assured him she felt so much better, thanks to his affectionate solicitude, that she only required to retire early to bed, in order to awake as well as usual in the morning.

Rex kissed her good-night, and rung for Regina, bidding her take excellent care of her mistress, and directing her to knock at his dressing-room door if Mrs. Chetwynd were restless during the night.

And now, Regina, tell me, quickly, for I have wasted too much time already in trying to elude any suspicion as to our work to-night. Is the coffin ready for the undertaker? Does the dummy look at all natural?"

"You will be perfectly satisfied with every thing when you see, Mrs. Chetwynd. Here is your waterproof and veil; do I go with you or—"

"You remain here and tell any one who inquires that I am sleeping, and must not be disturbed. Give me the key."

On the windy darkness Barbara went, fearless and alone.

At the vault, she called in a low whisper, and received as cautious an answer, while from the shadow of the building emerged a man, bearing a dark-lantern and a polished walnut coffin-lid.

Scarcely a word was interchanged while the two stood side by side and the man screwed down the lid. Then Barbara paid him a huge roll of bills, and he departed as he came.

She stood there, alone, in that damp, uncanny place, her eyes blazing like stars, and her teeth gleaming in a smile of fearful joy.

"Safe—so far!" she murmured.

"Yes!" a voice answered.

With a little cry she looked up—and faced Gervaise De Laurian!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PRISONER'S GUEST.

For a moment Barbara was paralyzed with horror and fear; her lips turned ashen, and a blood chill suddenly before her eyes.

"You are here?"

She gasped out the words in a struggling way that was altogether unusual for her.

"It is certainly myself, Mrs. Chetwynd—but no thanks to you for the fact. I presume you have no difficulty in remembering that?"

A cold chill was shivering over her; she put both her hands before her eyes as if to shut out the smiling, fiendish face opposite her.

"I am aware I am not the most agreeable sight you could wish to see, Mrs. Chetwynd—both on account of the story I might tell of a certain affair in which I played rather conspicuously, and the fact of the mystery that hangs over this little incident."

"Then you've come to betray me, have you?"

Her voice was hoarse and husky as she asked the question.

"Well, Mrs. Chetwynd, that depends. I would like, however, to know what this all means?"

He laid his hand on what had been Blanche's coffin, and stared at Barbara with a terrible earnestness of meaning in his eyes.

"What was she to do? That question went thundering through her brain, demanding an answer; it curdled her very heart as she realized, in all its frightful truthfulness, what this man could bring her to—this man whom she had tried to murder. Oh! the terrific forms her excited imagination took in those few seconds while she strove to think rationally. He had escaped her—how, how had she blundered?—but she knew she had missed her aim, and that he was on her track—an avenger as she had been. Would he betray her—who had had no mercy on him? Would his hand hurl her down to destruction as her own had sought to do with him, and was even now seeking to do so again?"

Should she cry him mercy? Should she humble herself before him—she who was so brave before? His voice scattered the lightning train of thought.

"Mrs. Chetwynd, this plate bears the name of my wife—my lawful wife. I see it reads, 'Blanche C. Davenall, aged twenty-two.'"

She did not answer; and he went on, watching her closely.

"I have a fancy to see how she looks; she was so beautiful on our wedding-day."

He deliberately opened his stout-bladed knife, and began unscrewing the lid.

No! no! you shall not touch it! She is not your wife—you have not the right!"

She jerked his arm in a powerful grasp; he wrenched it free with scarce an effort, smiling, that same smile of conscious power.

"I have not the right—I, her lawful husband, Mrs. Chetwynd? Besides, if I had not the au-

thority, who could prevent me? surely not a woman's arm; and it would scarcely do for you to shriek for help."

How true his words were! how completely he was inspiring her. A little curse was on her lips for coming there.

"I shall see how my wife looks. Please stand further back, Mrs. Chetwynd."

A tense white line gathered around Barbara's lips, and she quickly stepped aside, conscious now, with the consciousness of despair, that it would avail her nothing to interfere.

She watched him as he rapidly removed the screws, and before the last one was taken out, she had decided that there was but one course left—or, the gallows!

De Laurian lifted the lid and laid it down, glancing carelessly at the satin shroud, and the tips of the slippers. He carefully unpinned the napkin, and then Barbara stepped closely up to him.

"So that her hot breath flamed against his cheek, and her eyes glared almost in his own as he, armed with an ejaculation of surprise and fury.

"What does it mean? Woman—fiend, explain this mystery, or by all the memories of the time I laid, as dead, in a vault like this—I'll lock you alive in this place!"

"I said it was not your wife. Perhaps you believe me now?"

The intense calm in her voice was ominous and awful; but De Laurian only bent his face the nearer to her.

"Where's Blanche? What do you mean to do with her—or, if she is dead? Barbara, I demand the answer—is she dead? where is she?"

"And if I refuse to answer?" She smiled mockingly.

"You dare not, you vile witch you! I'll put you in that coffin, and screw down that lid unless you answer me!"

She shuddered, but still smiled on, silently.

"You refuse? Then by the powers of darkness, you shall feel my revenge!"

He jerked the dummy from its coffin, and threw it upon the damp floor and seized Barbara by the slender throat.

"Come, I'll do it all better than being hanged!"

His eyes blazed like a madman's, and a scream of awful horror came from Barbara's lips.

"Take your hands off me, you monster! My life is sweet to me, and to save it, I'll tell you all."

He smiled coolly again, but retained his hold, though loosened, on her fair throat.

"You'll swear to tell me all—ALL without reservation?"

"I swear to tell all without reservation, on two conditions."

"Name them," he answered.

"You will take your oath not to betray me. You will agree to aid me in my plans."

"I will swear anything," he answered, lightly, and a strange glitter came to his dark eyes.

"Now we have signed the compact, and I am ready for your revelation."

He lifted up the dummy as he spoke, and laid it in the coffin again; he screwed down the lid, and all the while Barbara was telling him the story of Blanche Davenall.

De Laurian held that end in his hands. He evinced no surprise, no sorrow, and Barbara wondered at the great change that had come over this man. There was, in place of the gay easiness of air, a peculiar sarcastic indifference, a something she feared to trust, a something she was forced to confide in, and—horror of horrors, a something from whose power she knew she would never again be free!

A weight had come, crushing over head and heart; and Barbara Chetwynd began to think there was an end to her tether. Did Gervaise De Laurian hold that end in his hands?

Her very soul was sick and faint. Who had soared to suffer remorse now felt the keenest pangs of a fear only such natures can feel.

De Laurian knew all this; he knew he knew it, and with that unbearable thought came the resolve to watch him with a vigilance that should exceed his own; and if he attempted playing her false!

The thought lent courage, and there came to her cheek, as the two walked silently along through the wind and darkness, a flush of renewed hope.

"I am going to Chetwynd Chase," she said, at length, to De Laurian, as they reached the side entrance.

"So am I," he returned, quietly.

"She turned around in quick surprise and alarm."

"You go to Chetwynd Chase?"

"Certainly. Why not? Did I not say I wished to see how my wife looked?"

"His cool, ready answer bewildered her. You see Blanche? It is impossible!"

He interrupted her, laying his hand heavily on her shoulder.

"See here, Mrs. Chetwynd, I intend to see Blanche within the hour. You will show me to her. Refuse, and you know the compact between us will be broken. If it is broken, it can not damage me, for I know your secret, and the knowledge can not be wrested from me. But you, Mrs. Chetwynd, might not fare so well."

How her heart sunk again; she was in his power as completely as ever mortal was in human power. After all her scheming, her successful accomplishment, it would end in this!—after all, that she had sold her soul for? Only a paltry revenge, that now, in the searching light of fear, seemed so miserable, so poor. But it can not be undone; she must answer to this man, and he must use her as he chose, or else—

She involuntarily put her hand to her throat. Not that! oh, anything rather than that!

"Come then," she said, briefly, and, with that deliberate, conscious smile, he bowed assent.

Silently they passed around the little lake, and up to the gloomy side entrance.

Not a light was visible on that side of the house, nor a sound to be heard save the pitiful wailing of the storm-charged wind as it swept bleakly up from the Passaic.

Up the dark, deserted stairs she led him, to the observatory. A grim smile parted his lips as he waited there a moment, in obedience to her words; he remembered it well.

Up the upper flight of stairs she went, closely followed by De Laurian.

"You will wait while I see if Blanche is dressed."

She opened the door; a faint light was burning, and Blanche sat sewing by the little stand. As Barbara entered she turned wearily around, but said nothing. She had learned how useless was entreaty, how futile were prayers for mercy. Other words she had no desire to speak. Barbara went up to her, a cold, steel glitter in her eyes.

"I have brought you a visitor—your husband is—"

A scream burst from Blanche's lips at the words.

"My husband? my Roy? Oh, Barbara, I am so thankful, so thankful! I knew you would not always be so obstinate. Roy, dear Roy! come right in. I'm here, alive and well!"

heard, and with a cry of exquisite joy, Blanche extended her arms to—
Gervaise De Laurian!
(To be continued—Commenced in No. 158.)

The Beautiful Forger:

OR,
THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GIRL.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLETT,
AUTHOR OF "MADRIEN'S MARRIAGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MAN'S NOBILITY.

OLIVIA had been left in an unenviable state of mind when her husband, encouraged by the guest who had constituted himself nurse, had announced his intended departure for a few days. His health had so rapidly improved, he was minded to try the effect of a change of scene.

"What other purpose had you?"

"To remove the obstacle between you and me," she answered, slowly, while she gazed steadily at him.

"God forgive you!" he uttered, solemnly. "And be thankful that you were spared such terrible guilt! It would have been vain."

"You would not have married me!" the desperate woman shrieked. "I see it all now! You love the girl you found here! Deny it if you dare!"

"I have no wish to deny it! I ought to love her. In her I have found my long-lost daughter!"

"Your daughter?"

"She is the child of Adele, my wife! The wife whose heart I broke by unjust accusations! You have heard me speak of her?"

"I have done more! I have seen her!"

"You—Olivia?"

"I was hardly sixteen then. I saw you first in Paris, Victor! long before you knew me. But I loved you! I determined to win you! You little knew to what arts you owed it that you grew so jealous and suspicious of your wife. You owed all that to me!"

"To you? You are mad, woman! How would you—?"

"I had an agent—a confidential agent! Every thing was trusted to him! He forged the letters—"

"Ourselves strode up to the passionate woman and grasped her wrist."

"Take back what you have said! Tell me you are not that fiend who poisoned the peace of my life! who made a devil of me! who filled my soul with the fire of hell itself!"

"She had found the way to move him at last. His teeth were set; his lips were rigid; his eyes glared as if insanity had suddenly looked from them."

"Let go my arm—you hurt me!" she cried.

"I will not lie now to please you! Yes, that was mine, and I gloried in it! I severed the tie between you and that hated rival! I swept her from my path, as I would have swept that doll of a girl! Now you know all, and I am in your power! You may kill me if you choose!"

"He released her, staggered back, and dropped into a chair. His face was upon his hands, that rested on the table, and the groans that burst from his bosom attested the depth of his suffering."

"They were heard without emotion by the female demon sitting opposite him. She only rejoiced that she had power to wring the heart that had been adamant to her avowal of love!"

"Your enemy is helpless now, Victor Ormsley," she said, after a pause. "It is the hour of your revenge." Then she looked down, for she could not help quailing before him after all. After his rejection of her love she thought his power to punish her exhausted; yet the grandeur of his nature overawed her in spite of herself.

"Several minutes elapsed before he looked up. Then she met his look, but it was to start in astonishment."

"Victor's face was calm—with a holy calm. Only prayer—only communion with Deity—could have so changed it—so imbued was every feature with deep spiritual tranquillity."

"He lifted his head solemnly."

"In the name of her you persecuted unto death—in my own name—I forgive you, Olivia. I forgive the wrong, as mine was forgiven."

"He rose as he spoke, and moved to leave the room. She followed hastily, to prevent his going."

"You will not leave me so, Victor? You are going! You withdraw your offers of aid, then?"

"Not one of them. The forgiveness my lost angel commissions me to pronounce would be vain if I contradicted it by deeds. Here—"

and he drew out a folded note, which he put in her hand, "here is a note to my agent in San Francisco, who will honor your drafts to the amount I had set apart for you. He will inform you of the removal of the chains against you, which I have satisfied. I have already communicated with him—and given him instructions."

Without a word of adieu, without a parting salutation, Victor Ormsley left the presence of the woman who had so deeply injured him, whom he had sacrificed so much to save. He passed out of the room, and mounted the horse which had been left by his orders secured at the gate.

A few words more will record the disposition of the individuals who have figured in this tale. Octavia Sloman found it difficult to abandon her ambitious schemes. She went to San Francisco, and lived awhile in obscurity, while the trial of her fellow conspirator, Querados, and his subordinates, was in progress. He was convicted of complicity in the frauds, and found guilty of sundry robberies and murders, by which his life was forfeited. He was executed with several of his gang.

Urie Boyce was one of his band, and was tried and sentenced; but, escaped the final punishment decreed by the law. In an attempt to climb the outer wall of the prison after he had broken out of his cell, he was shot dead by one of the guards.

Querados had made no revelation of the association of Olivia in his swindling transactions; but enough leaked out to make her an object of suspicion to the authorities; and when, after a few months, another of the forged deeds came into the light, and was proved to have been negotiated by her, she was arrested on the charge. But she had provided herself with the means of escape from public prosecution. She obtained leave to retire for the purpose of changing her dress, while the guards waited to conduct her to prison.

When half an hour passed without her appearance, they proceeded to her chamber. They found her lying upon a sofa, with her velvet cloak wrapped about her. She had been dead twenty minutes.

The permanent rise of property in California after the American occupancy rendered the Ormsleys men of vast wealth. A thriving town grew up near the hacienda, and there both the families fixed their residence. Victor having his home with his daughter and her husband, Dr. Merle and Margaret, too, formed part of their family, and Louise remained with them till her marriage to Stephen. Father Hamill performed the ceremony.

The good old dame of the log-cabin and her granddaughter, Eunice, were comfortably established in a neat cottage two miles from the hacienda.

THE END.

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID'S

SPECTER BARQUE,

A Tale of the Pacific.

will be the Season Sensation in Serials. No story for years will compare with it. It is, in all respects, the most beautiful, exciting and powerful of all the great romances of the day, and will add another to the long list of the SATURDAY JOURNAL'S literary triumphs.

The Sea-Cat:

OR,
THE WITCH OF DARIEN.
A STORY OF THE BUCCANEERS.

BY FREDERICK WHITTAKER.
AUTHOR OF "RED RAJAH," "DOUBLE-DEATH," "ROCK RIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

DIAMOND OUT DIAMOND.

The cabin of the Trinidad was gorgeous beyond anything known in our days. Originally a treasure ship, since she had been captured by the treacherous Spaniard, the wealth of every prize had been added to her splendours, till the cabin blazed with gold. Every visible bulkhead was covered with carving, and costly velvets and tapestry covered the seats and couches.

In the center of this cabin, before a splendid table inlaid with mosaic, the prize from a Genoese carrack, sat Don Luis Mendoza, while friend Abram was unfolding a huge parchment before him.

Patient Matias, with a stolid look of apathy on his black face, stood guard over four little white bags in another part of the cabin, and by the door was a dark-faced page with long black hair, whose dress was surprisingly rich and fantastic even for those days of brave apparel.

Don Luis was not to be seen. She was in a state-room near by, and anxiously awaiting—she knew not what.

"What is that paper you have there, Abram?" asked Don Luis.

"The deed which your lordship promised to sign for me. Indeed, my lord, you have taken advantage of the poor old man, and driven a terribly hard bargain with me; but the Jew is honest. What he has said he will keep to; and I have brought the sum for your lordship's use, in good gold."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mendoza, rubbing his hands. "Let us see the deed, Abram. I have one already prepared."

The Jew smiled a crafty smile.

"Strange that both of us should have thought of the same thing. But I should prefer your lordship to sign my deed. It was drawn by the best notary in Panama, and contains all the provisions usual in such cases."

"I prefer to sign my own," said Don Luis, quietly. "My own notary drew it. Look at it."

He threw a folded paper across the table to the Jew, and proceeded to roll a cigarette, watching the other furtively.

Old Abram took the paper, and began to tremble with excitement. He knew well that the bargain was not over yet, and began to feel a vague sense of uneasiness. After all, Don Luis on shore in Abram's palace, and Don Luis in the cabin of his own frigate, were two different people.

The Hidalgo wore an expression of furtively insolent triumph that frightened the Jew.

He looked at the deed submitted by the other, and found that it was a transfer of all his rights and interests in his wife's property; and that the wife herself was not associated in it.

"I can not accept this deed, senor," he said, firmly. "Dona Inez herself must sign, as in my own deed."

"I can not trouble Dona Inez with such details," said the captain, scornfully. "Do you think that a Castilian lady is meant to chaffer with a cheating old Jew peddler? You buy the property now at a tenth of its value, and what more can you ask? I sell you my rights. My wife can take care of her own."

"Then I suppose I must see the lady," said the Jew, resignedly. "It is a cruel sacrifice to require of me, senor."

"Who requires it? Not I. Take your deed, and give me my money."

"I shall leave your lordship instead," said Abram, rising. "I know my money, but I do not know my title. Matias, take the bags to the boat. I shall go ashore."

"Stop a moment," and the Hidalgo rose and stepped between him and the door. "You will keep your bargain and pay the money, or you'll go overboard to feed the sharks. Is that plain, Abram?"

The old Jew for one moment straightened, quivering with rage, for he was no coward. The next minute a thought seemed to strike him, and he calmed down.

"I will take the deed," he said. "Is it signed?"

Don Luis became pleasant at once.

"Ay, ay, I wouldn't cheat you, old man, but you shall have stipulated for my wife's signature ashore. What you get, you get. The rest is hers. Take the deed."

Abram secured the deed in his pocket, and beckoned to Matias to lay the bags on the table.

"Will your lordship please to count the gold?" he said.

"Let the slave do it," said Mendoza, carelessly. "You wouldn't dare to bring a short weight here."

The old Jew's eyes glittered strangely.

"I suppose your lordship will not sail till tomorrow. The mist is so thick to-night that no man can penetrate it."

"Of course not," said Mendoza.

"Count the gold, Matias," said Abram, and he turned away toward the door, saying to himself: "And tomorrow I'll have the information laid that will prevent your ever sailing hence."

For Abram had not been idle all day, and had found out from the men of the Trinidad, who were drinking ashore, certain facts in the history of that vessel, which he had resolved to use for revenge.

Matias, in his dull, monotonous fashion, began telling out the pieces on the table—"uno, dos, tre, quatro, cinque, seis, sette, otto, nove, diez," and such is the influence of chinking gold on human senses, that insensibly Don Luis found himself watching the slow operation with interest, and checking the count.

Old Abram meanwhile had been attracted by the glittering figure of the beautiful page, whom he now noticed for the first time.

The lad was very dark, and his costume was composed entirely of cloth of gold, while every button of his doublet was a cluster of brilliant stones. But the sharp eyes of the old Jew were especially riveted on his face, and as he looked, he trembled violently.

He said nothing, but a leaden paleness spread over his features, for he realized that he had been duped at last. Before him stood the living image of Dona Inez, the dead Governor's daughter, and the keen-witted Jew, who knew the secret history of every Panama family, realized that this must be the missing heiress about whom he had heard such rumors from the soldiery. Blas Ormsley had spread the tale of the false Witch of Darien, and Abram had heard it, half-believing it. Here, before his eyes, was the truth.

While he was revolving in his mind fresh schemes to outwit this new combination and save his darling money, he heard a slight clink at one of the stern windows of the galleon. It was so light that Don Luis did not notice it, absorbed as he was in watching the counting of the gold.

The disguised page heard it too, and for the first time started and looked eagerly toward the stern. Abram's eyes followed him, and beheld a strange sight.

The stern-ports of the frigate were large and lofty, and four richly-chased guns occupied the afterpart of the cabin. By each of these guns stood an armed man, who must have climbed in from the outside; and a fifth man, short and spare in flesh, with very broad shoulders and a square dark face, was in the act of stepping out from between the guns.

The man was in half armor and magnificent dress. His belt was full of pistols, and he wore a long sword which he seemed to disdain to draw. How such a party had effected its entrance so quietly was a mystery to Abram, but none to the cat-footed buccaneers.

As Abram caught sight of them, the disguised page uttered a cry of delight:

"The white chief. We are saved!"

In the same instant Dona Inez darted from a state-room to Morgan's side. Don Luis turned with a great start, and became white as a sheet, the page flew to Morgan and embraced his knees, sobbing, and the leader uttered the stern command:

"Silence, all, and secure the door."

In a moment four buccaneers had crossed the cabin and stood by the doors, silent and grim, while a number of others poured into the cabin through the stern windows, and filled the apartment, not a word being uttered by a soul, till Morgan said:

"Now by the great God who hears us I swear that if Pepita is unharmed, I will leave the seas forever. Don Luis Mendoza, you are met at last, and you and I will settle this matter like men. Surrender your ship, for I will have no more bloodshed, if I can help it. Answer, do you surrender?"

And Don Luis, pale as ashes, stammered out: "I surrender. Spare my life and I will join your band, king of the sea-rovers."

Morgan's lip curled with disdain as he answered:

"I would not keep you for a powder-monkey. Men, fire the signal and clear the ship!"

CHAPTER XXII.

CUTTING THE CABLE.

At the words of the buccaneer chief the doors that led to the deck were thrown wide open, disclosing the crew of the Trinidad, gathered in knots, most of them half drunk. One of the buccaneers fired a pistol into the crowd, and in a moment a scene of the wildest confusion arose. From all around the ship a number of buccaneers poured in through the open ports, and the cracking of pistols was followed by the charging yell of the desperate rovers.

The mist and darkness concealed the disparity of numbers, and the assailants had the advantage of a cross-fire in all directions, while the Spaniards were completely surprised. The buccaneers, moreover, were all picked men selected from the bravest of Morgan's old comrades; they were all powerful and skillful with their weapons, and accustomed to victory. The chief himself rushed out of the cabin at the head of his own body, and dealt such fearful blows with his razor-like cut-throat, that the cowardly Spaniards fled before him in terror.

But on shipboard there is nowhere to flee, save overboard or below hatches.

The buccaneers were down below, throwing hand-grenades, and driving the men between decks up to the air; and others were above, cutting them down as they made their appearance.

Then first one and then another began to drop out of the ports, and swim to shore, and within ten minutes every Spaniard, but Don Luis and the dead and wounded, had vacated the Trinidad, and was seeking safety in the water.

And then was exhibited the iron discipline of the buccaneers, the great secret of their success. With them nothing was done while any thing remained to be done. A single buccaneer, with drawn pistol, stood guard over Don Luis, in the cabin, while the rest, returning their weapons, became, in a moment, quiet and obedient sailors at the beck of Morgan.

Some flew to the rigging, ascended the yards and cast loose the sails, while others manned sheets and braces in desperate haste. Morgan, leaving the people in the cabin to take care of themselves, sprung to the summit of the after-castle, and thundered his orders over the ship.

In the midst of their haste a red flash lighted up the fog toward the shore, and the boom of a gun was followed by the humming of a round shot overhead.

Morgan laughed scornfully and muttered: "Fire away from every gun. 'Tis all guess-work."

As if to answer his words, a great shouting was heard from the shore, and a succession of flashes along the sea-wall announced that the garrison was alarmed, and determined to sink the Trinidad if they could.

Nor was this so difficult as might seem. During the daytime every gun had been trained on or about the frigate, which lay full under their broadside, and spite of the fog, the missiles came surprisingly near. The only thing which saved the Trinidad was the circumstance that her having swung out of line with the tide, so as to keep her out of the direct fire.

While the cannonade continued increasing in fierceness, the reckless buccaneers laughed and joked as they manned the ropes, and before long one of them came to report that the ship was ready to start all but tripping the anchor.

Then Morgan held up his hand, and felt a faint breeze, about enough to fill the sails.

"Cut the cable," he said, briefly. "I take the helm myself to-night."

The next moment the heavy blows of an axe were heard, and the cannonade from the shore grew louder than before.

Suddenly there was a sound of parting ropes, and the frigate, hitherto straining at her anchor, glided smoothly away with an easy motion that told that she was free, and yielding to her helm, swept round seaward through the mist, guided by the brilliant flashes of the guns on shore as she stood out to sea.

It was a dangerous experiment in such a channel, and amid such a fog, but the latter was rapidly clearing away owing to the tremulous motion given to the air by the hot cannonade. First it thinned, then it began to lift, and finally it swept entirely away as a brisk breeze from the north came rushing down from the heights, curling the bay into little waves, and revealing ship and town as if by the lifting of a curtain.

The Trinidad was bending over to the breeze with all sail set, and the shot from the batteries was plunging into the water, throwing the spray all over her.

But every instant increased the distance, and while the fog was gone the night was still dark, and the aim of the gunners was uncertain.

In half an hour the Trinidad was out of gunshot, and the buccaneer chief, calling one of the crew, relinquished the helm, and walked down into the cabin.

He found it occupied as he had left it. The two reunited sisters were seated together on a couch, exchanging the confidences of twenty years' separation, and Don Luis was moodily watching them, guarded by the grim-looking buccaneer with his pistol, and evidently completely cowed down.

Friend Abram and Matias were waiting patiently near by, both of them hopeful of release, for the buccaneers had not deigned to notice them so far.

Into this group came Morgan and broke it up with the words, "Don Luis Mendoza, prepare to die."

Instantly the haughty cavalier sunk on his knees, ashy pale with craven fear, and began to utter prayers for his life.

Morgan cut him short.

"Dog, you have cost me too long a chase; but I'll give you one chance for your life. Will you fight me here and now?"

"What have I done to you to die?" cried Mendoza, in agony. "I swear that Pepita is as pure as when—"

"Dog, I know it," said the buccaneer, with cutting scorn. "Think you I would offer you the rights of a gentleman else? You kept her to cheat yonder Jew, so that when he had paid you for your right, you could produce her at the last moment and claim the half of the property in hers. But, senor, you know not something. Don Alonzo del Campo y Espinosa made a will, and under that will I am Pepita's guardian. I heard your bargain with yonder Jew, and he is the man that shall right Pepita and give her back her fortune."

Friend Abram started up, alarmed at a certain hidden meaning in the buccaneer's tone, exclaiming:

"Holy father Jacob, senor bucaniero, how can I do it? I am but a very poor man."

"I will settle with you afterward," said Morgan, icily. "You escaped my men last year. I will not escape you now. Don Luis, I will come on deck? You have insulted and ill-treated my promised wife, Dona Pepita del Campo y Espinosa. I offer you the death of a gentleman. Will you come?"

But Don Luis made no answer, only trembling.

Then the freebooter stepped up to him, and struck him, with a backhanded blow, across the face, starting the blood.

"Will you come now?" he hissed. "By the heaven above us, if not, I'll flog you to death like a negro slave!"

Then, at last, Don Luis, hunted into a corner, started up, drew his sword and rushed out on deck.

Morgan was about to follow, when Dona Inez flung herself on her knees before him.

"Morgano, do not you slay him. Remember, I am his wife."

"Ay, but Pepita is mine. Girl, you are too late. You should have thought of that before you married him."

"Morgano, one word. You loved me once. For that love, spare him."

"For that love I will do this, Inez. I will drive him overboard. If he can swim, good. If not, God have mercy on him."

And he rushed out on deck into the night. Pepita stopped her sister from following.

"Not to save him, sister. My honor was safe only through his fears, and I were less than a dog could I forgive what he has made me suffer. It is the punishment of God."

And the disguised page threw back her black hair, and stood at the cabin door, somber and pitiless, to see her wrongs avenged by the white chief.

Morgan and Mendoza, both stripped to the waist, stood amid a ring of buccaneers, who gathered round with stern impartiality to see the singular duel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE END OF ALL.

DEEP down in the bosom of the waters, on the track the Trinidad was steering, lay a reef of rocks twenty feet from the surface, a marine mountain, with rugged, craggy head.

Sprawled far out upon this reef, like a gigantic spider, lay the ghastly hideous form of the sea-cat, for the few men it had swallowed were but a whet to its monstrous appetite.

In size it was even huger than the well-remembered creature that attacked the Asuncion off St. Lucia years before. Its mighty arms were some fifty feet in length, and as thick at the base as the body of a man, tapering away to whiplike extremities.

Deep in the bosom of the bay lay the sea-cat, where the currents of the sea had washed it, and there it was likely to lie for days, weeks and years, waiting for the prey that was sure to come to it at last.

Almost invisible clinging to the dark rock, every now and then one of the slender feelers would dart out into the surrounding waters, happing round a heedless fish within range, no matter what size, for the all-devouring appetite of the sea-cat rejects nothing, however contemptible.

The crushed fragments of the ingulfed boats were scattered over the rocks around, weighed down with the loads of pearl oysters.

So the sea-cat waited for its prey, patient and ever watchful. Anon the lately quiescent mass began to exhibit signs of life, as some mysterious instinct warned it of the coming of the ship.

The great green eyes were turned, with a hungry glare, toward the land, and the body swelled out to three times its former dimensions, while the arms loosened their hold on the rock, and the whole creature rose up in the water toward the surface, being carried by the current slowly seaward.

Presently the splashing of waves against the bows of a ship became audible, and the great frigate Trinidad bore down on the monster with all sail set.

On her decks in the waist were Morgan and Mendoza, and just as they neared the sea-cat an old buccaneer gave the signal, and both men approached each other with drawn swords.

To all appearance Don Luis was the more formidable of the two, tall and finely-built, with a face of exceeding beauty and the form of an Apollo. Opposite to him stood Morgan, a full head shorter, his broad, sturdy figure and square Welsh face showing in great contrast to the elegant Spaniard. It was like the fight between a bull-dog and a grayhound, and the chances were even that the latter's activity might elude and overcome the strength and pluck of the former.

The instant the swords clashed every one drew aside, leaving an open passage to the ports on either side the vessel.

Then Morgan, without a word, set his teeth, and lunged like a steam-engine at Don Luis. Straight as an arrow he sent every thrust, and not one could the don parry. Back he went, leaping from side to side, every now and then flashing down a cut and point to get a return, but in vain.

Every time he made an attack it was thrown wide by a nervous twist of the buccaneer's sword, and the return pressed him further back toward the open port.

Then, all of a sudden, a long white snake seemed to dart in at the open port, and caught the unhappy man about the middle, while a shout went up on board.

"The sea-cat! The sea-cat!"

"The sperm whale, as is well known to sailors and naturalists, makes the entire-fish, of all sizes, including the sea-cat, a principal article of food. Pieces of the arms of the latter have been found in the stomach of the cachalot, which, judging from proportionate thickness, must have come from limbs measuring twenty, forty, sixty, and in one instance, seventy-four feet in length. It is a fortunate thing for humanity that the larger specimens of this monster keep at the bottom of the sea for the most part. Were they to fall there, compelling them to rise to the surface, the sea would be far more dangerous than it is."

In a twinkling the buccaneers had sprung for axes, and attacked the monster as a second arm writhed in over the bulwarks.

There was not a coward on that deck, and the ship was going through the water at the rate of six knots an hour.

In a moment the massive arm over the bulwarks was divided, and the sole remaining one was that wrapped around Don Luis. Then the poor wretch clung frantically to a gun-carriage, shrieking wildly for help, while the loathsome coils clung tighter and tighter, and his breath grew shorter.

At last, with a despairing yell, he loosed his hold and was snatched through the port into the darksome sea without, to the ravenous maw of the sea-cat.

The men rushed to the side as the vessel swept on, and saw a writhing arm uplifted amid the white wake of the frigate, holding a yelling, struggling human figure.

Then the arm curved inward to the sea, and all was still, as the sea-cat sunk to the bottom with its victim.

Our story is ended, reader, and you and I part company once more, to voyage to other shores.

The villain of our tale, a true one in its main features, has gone to his long home, and the lost child of the wreck is found and restored to her sister.

It needs but little to tell what followed.

The once-pitiless and always reckless buccaneer left the seas after his last capture. Before he left the coast of Panama, he compelled friend Abram to disgorge enough of his ill-gotten wealth to pay a fair price for the inheritance of the children of Espinosa. The Jew knew better than to bargain with the buccaneer, and Matias was the messenger for the bags of gold that were the purchase-money of half Panama. The cowardly Spaniards did not dare molest him, for Morgan sent word that, if a doubtless was touched, there might be a second sack of Panama. They were ignorant of his force, which rumor magnified to a fleet, and did not feel called on to run into danger to save a rich Jew from spoliation. As for the money-lender himself, he had heard too much of buccaneer tortures to stand out for terms. He received a good deed from Espinosa's heirs, and paid a fair price for the first time in his life, getting off safe with his skin.

Then the Trinidad sailed away, and Morgan, the buccaneer disappeared from the scene of his victories, and troubled the Spaniards no more. He reached England in safety, married Pepita, was knighted by the king, and acquired a splendid estate in Wales, his native country.

Inez remained a widow only two years, and married an English baronet, Sir Miles Walsingham. Her posterity exist to the present day. The union of Pepita and Morgan was blessed with but one child, a daughter, who married her first cousin, John Walsingham, and enriched that family with her vast wealth.

And the hand that traces these lines belongs to one whose family, at the present day, are not ashamed to trace back part of the lineage to the king of the buccaneers; for they come in a direct line from Morgan and Pepita, the Indian queen, the disguised Witch of Darien, saved from her last enemy by the terrible SEA-CAT.

THE END.

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